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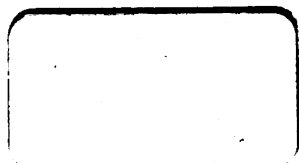
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THE BAD TIMES

THE BAD TIMES

BY

GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM pseud,

AUTHOR OF "THE SKEETING POT," ETC.

James Owen Hannay

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SIR HORACE PLUNKETT, K.C.V.O., F.R.S.

O heart too brave to suffer long
Under the spite of little men,
Or pay their hatred back again
With bitterness ; O soul too strong

To turn from what you find to do
In sick disgust or mere despair
And find your life work other where
I offer this my work to you.

G. A. B.

(RECAP)

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THE BAD TIMES

CHAPTER I

THE month of August in the year 1800 saw the last act of the drama played out. Irishmen enacted the part of statesmen, strutted and mouthed with the best of that kind of man, for eighteen years. Then William Pitt, deeming that the play grew wearisome, or fearing perhaps that the actors might take themselves too seriously, rang the curtain down. Few men were well satisfied with the management of the last act. Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Secretary Cooke may perhaps have slept comfortably for a little while. They deserved to sleep, for they had worked hard and watched anxiously. It is not very easy to purchase the votes of proud gentlemen, and intrigue is nervous work when at any moment a blundering fool may say too much, or disaster follow swiftly on dealings with some unexpectedly honest man. No doubt there were others also who breathed freely and were content; the men without consciences, the hungry seekers after place and pension. These, with promises of posts and pensions safe under their pillows, slept and had visions of a bright future; as maidens, in simpler days than ours, used to dream on scraps of bridecake.

But most men were neither happy nor comfortable.

Even the promise of some well-endowed deanery for a younger brother, even a brand new, blazoned patent of nobility, even golden coins jingling abundantly in breeches pockets, will not always quiet the uncomfortable murmurings of outraged honour. For these men who took the promises and titles and gold in exchange for their votes were gentlemen, or had been gentlemen before they smirched their honour with bribes. Men who have lived, spoken, thought as gentlemen for years, do not feel comfortable just at first as knaves. It takes time to grow accustomed to a wholly new outlook upon life. Still, gold, if there is enough of it, and a title which obliterates an old honourable name, will do much to soothe the vagaries of ill-regulated consciences. Less enviable were those who gave their votes and then went home with an uneasy sense of having been fooled. They had listened to very terrifying talk about blazing homesteads and murdered men, about United Irishmen who plotted, and ideas imported from France, the land of the guillotine, which threatened property and life. It had certainly seemed at one time as if a union with England offered security, the only possible security for them and their class. These timid men, immensely dreading new and incomprehensible forces, had given their votes and got nothing in exchange for them. It had seemed the only thing to do. But afterwards they were not quite certain of their own wisdom. Questions pressed to be answered. Might not they, the gentlemen of Ireland, have themselves led Ireland, saved Ireland? They had surrendered Ireland because they feared Ireland. But was not England also a power to be feared? They had been great men, the rulers of a nation. Had they sunk into the positions of squireens in a contemptible province? And had they made sure

of their own safety? How long would England consider herself bound by the articles of that treaty of union? They were not very happy, these gentlemen who had been fooled into voting for Lord Castlereagh's bill.

But besides all these, besides the men who had been bribed or fooled, there were others. There were those who had opposed the union to the last, who were not to be bought or hoodwinked or bullied. These men went riding home from Dublin, northwards, southwards, westwards, with black anger in their hearts. They were beaten men, beaten, so they believed, by the allied forces of knaves and fools. They rode alone, refusing even each other's company. They sat alone in the parlours of inns, drank good wine morosely, cursed the impertinent who dared to speak to them. They reached their homes, fair houses built by lakesides or amid wooded hills, mansions reared in the bogland, and castles rendered indefensible now by a generation which required light and comfort. There for the most part they sulked helplessly until they learned to satisfy souls which had once known greatness, with the care of horses and dogs and with much drinking of smuggled claret and whisky-punch.

Not one of all of them went home in a bitterer rage than Stephen Butler of Dhulough. He rode with his arm in a sling, for a bullet from the pistol of one of Castlereagh's bravoës had gone ripping among the muscles of it one morning in the Phoenix Park. Mr. Secretary Cooke had hinted to him of a title in exchange for his vote and influence; or money, if he preferred money, plenty of money, for Stephen Butler of Dhulough was a strong man, worth paying a good price for. But Stephen Butler was not to be bought. They

had fêted and flattered him. Men with great names and high places drank with him; fine ladies smiled on him, praised him, would have kissed him very likely had he shown any disposition for kissing. But at last they all became sick of the sneer on his face, and found themselves no nearer getting a promise of his vote. They had tried to frighten him with tales of Wexford rebels and French landings and United Irishmen. But Stephen Butler laughed in their faces.

"I'd rather trust my country," he said, "to the worst rebel that ever shouldered pike, than hand it over to Englishmen. By God, if there must be foreigners in Ireland, let them be French, not English!"

Then one of Castlereagh's convivial gladiators, a man who could shatter wine-glass stems with pistol bullets, a trickster who could pierce the pips on a nine of diamonds at twenty paces and not waste a shot, found occasion to insult Stephen Butler in a public place. There was a meeting in the early morning. The man of showy tricks shot less straight than usual, but there was a bad hour for Stephen Butler afterwards with a surgeon, and then two or three weeks of inactivity. Stephen shot so straight that it was not worth while to set a surgeon poking for the bullet in the man's brain. Later on Stephen Butler appeared pale-faced in the Parliament house and gave his votes more savagely than ever.

When it was all over he rode west, down to the seaboard of Connacht, where he lived. Travelling was slow then even if a man had a good horse under him, and it was only on the evening of the third day that Stephen Butler rode into Athlone and gave his horse to the ostler of the inn. In the parlour sat a young man, fresh-complexioned, dandified, smiling to himself in im-

mense good humour. He rose and greeted Stephen Butler with outstretched hand and words of welcome. Stephen put his uninjured arm behind his back and stared.

"Come," said the young man; "you know me, Mr. Butler. Damn it! don't pretend not to know your nearest neighbour."

"I knew a gentleman once," said Stephen, "by the name of De Lancy. I don't know the scoundrel who sold his country for the sake of hearing men call him Lord Daintree."

The young man flushed crimson.

"My God, sir, you shall answer for this!"

"Be careful," said Stephen with a sneer; "I can shoot with my left hand."

He called the landlord and demanded a private sitting-room.

"I have no taste," he said, "for the company I find in your parlour. I shall sup alone."

Next day he started early and rode hard. For the rest of the journey he kept ahead of his neighbour and saw him no more. Late one evening he arrived at the borders of his own property and rode into the village of Cuslough. The people, his own people, turned out to meet him. They lighted a fire at the entrance of the village and cheered him as he rode up. He was a hard man, but they loved him for his justice and his courage. They clung to him, these ignorant peasant people, as one who understood them, spoke their language, knew their ways, and stood between them and worse harm than his own stern rulership inflicted. So they cheered him, little knowing or understanding what he had done or why he came home from Dublin with hard anger in his face. But he did not heed them.

Not a word of greeting came from his lips, or a glance of recognition from his eyes. He spurred his tired horse past the blazing turf, past the pitiful cabins of the village, on to the lonely mountain road beyond.

He rode three miles or more, but slowly, for the road was very rough. Beyond him lay the sea, a desolate waste of dark water. He smelt the breath of it, and heard it rushing against the rocks. The road bent sharply to the left, skirted the shore, climbed a hill, and then below him lay Dhulough village. Again there were crowds gathered in the streets and great fires lit. Again Stephen rode silent through the cheering people. This time he nodded recognition once. Two men, stewards on his estate, stood together in the firelight. They had arrayed themselves in their old volunteer uniforms, worn twenty years before, and had their muskets in their hands. On them Stephen smiled grimly. Then he rode on to the great gates of Dhulough demesne. He went slowly through the scanty dwarfed trees; passed the dark lake from which the house and village took their name, and came again upon dwarfed trees and beyond them the house.

He reined up his horse and sat for a while motionless. Beyond the house lay the sea, faintly lit now by the newly risen moon, as yet only in its first quarter. There were patches of bright white here and there where the Atlantic rollers broke sullenly over some half-submerged rock. A mile from the shore lay the little Ilaun an Anama, Island of Souls, a blacker mass upon the dark surface of the water. His eyes moved from the sea to the shore. He saw his house, long, low, black, roofed with heavy, flag-like slates, its walls on the sea side sheeted with the same dark slates. Through the windows shone many lights, the chimneys smoked,

the door stood wide to welcome him. He let his horse move on again.

A crowd of servants—men in tarnished liveries, slatternly maidservants, barefooted and short-petticoated—stood to meet him. Eager hands seized the horse's head while the master dismounted. A chorus of shouted welcomes greeted him. There was pattering and trampling of feet, naked and shod, across the hall, that fires might be piled yet higher and candles snuffed afresh in honour of the master's home-coming.

A young woman stepped forward, smirking, curtsy-ing. She held a boy by the hand, Antony Butler, Stephen's son. The child hung back, clinging to the woman's skirts. He had the gentle, timid eyes of his mother, beautiful Una Bourke, who had died when the boy was born. And Stephen Butler had seen little of him since. Sheila Dogherty had him to nurse. He learned to love his foster-mother and stood in awe of his father.

"What do you mean," said Stephen, "by bringing the boy here to-night? I'll send for him when I want him. Take him home at once."

Then he turned to the gaping crowd of servants who stood round—

"And get you back to your kitchens and your kennels, all of you, but Red Michael. Let him set candles and meat and wine in the library. I want none of you near me."

Next morning Stephen Butler was early astir. He dressed himself carefully, beautifully, as we might say, who belong to a generation in which gentlemen have lost the sense of beauty in their clothes. Then he dispatched a groom on horseback to the Rectory.

"Bid Mr. Moneypenny come up here to me," he said; "and bid him come at once."

Mr. Moneypenny obeyed the summons. Most people, priests, parsons, gentlemen, or farmers, who lived within ten miles of Dhulough were accustomed to obey Stephen Butler when he laid commands upon them. Mr. Moneypenny would have obeyed a lesser man than the patron of his living. He was no haughty ecclesiastic, and took little delight in stories of bishops like Ambrose and Basil and Thomas à Becket, who asserted the dignity of their office against the laity. He girt up his rusty cassock, mounted his pony, and as soon as might be stood bowing before Stephen Butler in the hall of Dhulough House.

"To-morrow," said Stephen, "is Sunday, I think."

"It is," said the parson. "It surely is, the blessed sabbath, the day of rest, the eighth Sunday after Trinity. The gospel for the day——"

"I wish," said Stephen Butler, "to receive the sacrament. Is this the usual Sunday for the administration?"

Mr. Moneypenny gave a start of surprise. Not for many years, not since his wife died, had Stephen Butler received the sacrament. This abstention had been a source of grief to the pastor. Yet he had not dared to remonstrate with one whom he held so greatly in awe.

"It is not the regular Sunday," he said. "No, it is not Sacrament Sunday. I have been accustomed to administer to all such as should be religiously——" He stopped. Stephen Butler's face might have made a bolder man hesitate in his speech. "But, of course, if your honour wishes——"

"I do wish. And I wish to receive it alone. Mark me. I will not have your wife or that hulking son of yours, if he's at home from college, kneeling beside me. Tell them that. You will also look you out the silver

candlesticks my mother gave to the church, and the silver cross, and you will place them on the altar. I will have the candles lighted. I know that since you have been rector here these things have been removed. I did not interfere with you. It was your affair, not mine, what ornaments stood in the church. But I wish them replaced to-day."

"But," said the parson, "but—a cross and lighted candles. These things savour of popery. I cannot—my conscience——"

Perhaps the strongest emotion in Mr. Moneypenny's mind, the thing which came nearest to being a principle, was his dislike of popery. In defence of the purity of the Protestant faith and the Protestant worship he would have faced, courageously enough, several dangers and a good deal of unpleasantness. But he would not, indeed he could not, face the anger of Stephen Butler.

"But doubtless the occasion is exceptional. It is an evil time in which our lot is cast. All shall be as your honour wishes."

It was but a scanty congregation which usually assembled for worship in the little grey church which stood in a corner of Stephen Butler's demesne. The master himself, when he was not in Dublin busy with his Parliament duties, sat in a great square pew under the pulpit, curtained close from vulgar eyes. Opposite him was Mrs. Moneypenny, fat and motherly, with her children. Behind, dotted here and there in ones and twos, were the few who belonged by birth and descent to the reformed church; and a few more, looked on dubiously by Protestants and Papists alike, who, for one reason or another, had conformed during the period of the penal laws. A vague rumour of strange doings brought all of them to church on the Sunday after

Stephen Butler's return home. There came also—for in those days religious distinctions were less emphasised than they are now—several of the better class of Roman Catholics. They were curious to know what was to be done or said.

The morning service dragged itself out to its close. Mr. Moneyppenny cut short a sermon on Naaman the Syrian. He promised seven points of doctrine and practice. He gave no more than three, because he was ill at ease and doubtful about what would happen when the time of the celebration came. Stephen Butler sat unseen behind his curtains. But all knew of his presence by the sound of his voice in the responses.

At last the moment arrived. The prayer of consecration was said. The kneeling minister himself received the sacrament. Then, standing with the paten in his hand, he faced the congregation and waited. Behind him the two great candles burned, and their light shone on the white cloth and glittered from the silver cross. From the window above the altar fell a beam of sunlight. The motes in it danced across the oaken chancel rails and slanted down to the grey pavement of the aisle.

Stephen Butler unclasped the door of his pew and stalked forward, leading the child Antony by the hand. No one else in the church stirred. Then, motioning the boy to kneel on the pavement where the sunlight fell, Stephen himself knelt, grim, upright, defiant before the altar rails.

“The body of our Lord Jesus Christ——”

Stephen Butler, with head bowed at last, received it in his outstretched hand. Then with a solemn, slow gesture he crossed himself. Mr. Moneyppenny trembled with mingled terror and indignation. This was popery,

unashamed and horrible, rearing its head in the very sanctuary itself. Nevertheless, with the fear of Stephen Butler heavy on his soul, he dared not protest.

“The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ——”

Again the outstretched hands and the bowed head. Again, deliberately, the sign of the cross. Then when chalice and paten were laid on the altar Stephen Butler rose. He opened the gate of the chancel and approached the altar. He motioned Mr. Moneypenny aside, and took one in each hand the chalice and the paten wherein lay the remains of the consecrated species. Holding them high above his head and still facing the altar he said slowly—

“Standing in the presence of God, and holding by Christ the Saviour of the world, I swear that never while life lasts will I yield obedience to laws made for this realm in England, except in so far as such laws are forced upon me by power which I cannot resist; that never while life lasts will I pay loyalty to any government other than that proper, under its own constitution, to this kingdom of Ireland. That I shall resist to the utmost of my power, wherever resistance is possible, the tyranny of foreigners imposed by fraud and perjury on this my native land. May Christ withdraw His mercy from me, and may God the Father put black blight upon my soul on the day when I am false to this my oath.”

There was silence. Then Stephen Butler laid down the chalice and the paten. He turned, and for the first time the people saw his face. It was white and terrible.

“Bear witness,” he said, “every one of you.”

He walked to where the child Antony still knelt in the sunlight. Stooping over him, he took him by the

hand and raised him up. He led the boy, dazed and terrified, up to the altar. He took the two small soft hands and laid them on the chalice and the paten, covering them with his own and holding them tight. Then he spoke again.

"Eight years ago, standing by the font, I took in the name of this child certain solemn vows. None doubted or gainsaid my right. Now again in his name, until he be old enough to take this promise on himself, I swear with him and for him. Antony Butler, say after me the words I say. 'Standing in the presence of God, and holding by Christ the Saviour of the world——'"

Wonderfully clearly through the deep silence of the church came the treble of the child's voice repeating—

"Standing in the presence of God, and holding by Christ the Saviour of the world."

"I swear."

"I swear."

Sentence by sentence the oath was repeated till Stephen Butler had said the last words. Then, before the child responded to them, the parson, who had stood cowering against the wall, started forward. He fell upon his knees and stretched up his hands.

"I entreat you!" he cried. "I beg, I pray of you. Do not lay the curse on the child's soul. Oh, my God! This is the unforgivable sin; this is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost!"

Stephen Butler cast one glance at him. The man seemed to wither under the contempt of it. He shrank into himself, and fell forwards till his forehead touched the ground. There he lay huddled, with his white surplice tangled ridiculously round his limbs. The stern man's voice went on again—

"May Christ withdraw His mercy from me, and may God the Father put black blight on my soul on the day when I am false to this my oath."

The boy's voice followed, uttering clause by clause. At last it was over. The little hands, crushed against the silver vessels, were released. Stephen Butler, followed by his son, returned to his square pew. Poor plump Mr. Moneypenny rose to his feet. His trembling hands covered the consecrated elements with a white napkin.

"Consecrated, desecrated," he muttered. "This was blasphemy, the sin for which there is no forgiveness."

But no one heard him or heeded him. Nor did the people pay more attention to the prayers which followed. There was an audible sigh of relief when the blessing was said, the blessing which sounded strangely, though no one there had the wit and curiosity to note its strangeness. What had the Peace of God which passeth all understanding to do with the oath sworn before the altar, or with the man who swore it, or with the child dragged that day into the strife between the stronger nation and the weaker, the strife which has lasted without truce from that time until this?

Stephen Butler left the church alone. Alone he walked through the great gates and among the stunted trees. He stood alone for a while beside the dark lake. Then he went home, shut himself alone into his library, and wrote carefully an account of the oath he had sworn, and how he laid it also on his son. On the outside of the paper he wrote these words:—

"For my son, Antony Butler. And I charge him to bind his children after him as I have bound him."

CHAPTER II

STEPHEN BUTLER lived out his threescore years and ten, a grim, fierce man to the last, a rebel in heart, embittered because he found no opportunity of offering effectual resistance to the power he hated. The years brought, besides a sense of his impotence, a great disappointment to him. He understood that he would leave behind him a son little likely to live in the spirit of the oath sworn for him. Perhaps Antony Butler inherited too much of his mother's gentle sweetness. Perhaps the cowed submissiveness of the Celtic peasants came to him with his foster-mother's milk and the companionship of her children. Perhaps old Stephen's masterful spirit crushed his from the start. It became more and more plain that he was not a son after his father's heart.

"I'd rather see you fox-hunting and drinking whisky; I'd rather see you plunging the estate and then rack-renting the tenants; I'd rather see you gambling and wenching in London like the rest of them, than—good God! that I must die here and leave a sentimental fool behind me."

So he used to speak, and the young man only sighed for answer. He had no taste for hard riding and hard drinking; none for the card table and the brothel. He liked to roam by the seashore or inland over the brown bogs. He liked to listen to the old tales the peasants

told him, and to paint. He painted the sea, calm in the early summer when men and girls waded into it to gather wrack; painted it when the round rollers from the Atlantic rushed against the shore, and broke themselves, white and furious, on the rocks of Ilaun an Anama, the Island of Souls, which stood sentry a mile from the land. He painted the little lake behind the house when the foliage of the stunted trees was reflected in it, when grey mists hung over it, and brown, curled leaves floated crisp on its surface, and when the winter frost held it and all but the ocean itself stiff and still.

"I'd die and be damned contentedly," said old Stephen, "if only I had a man for a son! If you had a man's vices to-day you might have a man's virtues to-morrow."

The outbreaks against Antony became more frequent towards the end. Gout tortured the old man, flying here and there through his body, and when the pain came he raged against every one and everything. Antony bowed to the storm. He had not a man's vices. There was no use pretending to his father that he had. He preferred the old Celtic fairy tales, the myths and legends, the curious religious poems, the dreamy love songs—preferred them, he could not understand why, to wine and cards. He loved the sea and the dark lake, the fringing trees on the demesne side of it, the bogland and bare fields beyond it. He did not love the reckless joviality of the men who galloped on horseback, who drank and quarrelled in their cups, who fought each other, who worked themselves up into a fervour of excitement at election times. He supposed that what his father said was true. He had not a man's vices. He did not think it likely that he would ever

have what his father regarded as the virtues of a man. He was not, properly speaking, a man at all.

At last old Stephen died. Antony Butler was free to live as he liked, and there was no tongue left in the world that had a right to scourge him. At first his love of painting claimed him. He went abroad; studied here under one master, there under another. He learned to criticise and to admire. He came to understand what was good in his art and what was bad. He also got to know that he himself would never be an artist. It was not in him to do great work. He wandered through Europe, seeing everything, buying and sending home to Dhulough picture after picture until the packing-cases stood in piles in the halls and lumber rooms of the old house.

He was never really happy. The feeling of his own incompetence haunted him. His father had reckoned him less than a man, judging him from the standpoint of a fierce old political fighter. He was less than a man too among the artists and men of letters whom he knew. They had powers of expression and passions to express. He was, he saw himself very clearly, a dabbling amateur, a dilettante, a rich man with money to spend on a rich man's fancies in art. He was not of their brotherhood, though they tolerated him. And he was always troubled with a vague, uneasy homesickness. With Italian skies over him his heart went back to Dhulough. In exchange for all the pictures he sent home two kept coming to him from home: a picture of dark lake water, and another of Ilaun an Anama, the solitary Island of Souls, with the ocean tearing at its shores.

Yet he thought of home, of Dhulough, of Ireland, with a kind of dread. It seemed to him that there his

father still ruled. Once at home his father's contempt would crush him again. His father's will would dominate him. The terrible old oath would claim him and force him into ways he hated to imagine. The words of it kept coming back to him.

Once, kneeling to hear mass said at an altar in the cathedral at Amiens, he was swept by a wave of religious emotion. He felt as he bowed before the Host that Christ Jesus was beside him, around him, within him. The sense of his own pitiful failure, of his lack of all the virtues and powers which made men great, seemed only to intensify the delightful love of the One who embraced him. Then suddenly came a cold horror. It was not that he doubted the reality of the miracle the priest had wrought in bringing the actual Christ close to him. That he was a Protestant by baptism and education did not cause him to deny the Presence on the altar. But he knew that Christ, present there for all the others, was not for him. With his own lips he had prayed—prayed before another altar—"May Christ withdraw His mercy from me."

After that day his homesickness troubled him more and more. He thought often of the men he knew at home; not the men of his own class, the riding, drinking, swaggering gentry, but of the old men who cowered by the cabin firesides in winter time, the young men and women who toiled in the fields and the fishing boats. He remembered their tales and songs, the crooning of their pipes, and wailing of their fiddles. It seemed to him that if he were at home among them he might be at rest. He might accept his own failure and lie, unresisting, under his own curse. They also were a people who had failed. They had fallen under the domination of wills stronger than their own. They

were his father's people as he was his father's son. Old Stephen Butler had been their master.

Once, travelling through a part of Spain little frequented by strangers, he was indebted for a night's hospitality to a priest. It surprised and interested him to learn that his host's name was O'Neill. After supper, apologising for his curiosity, he asked how it was that a man with a name so plainly Irish came to be ministering as a priest to Spanish people.

"I am the last of my race," said the priest. "We were, I believe, great people in our own country once. For you have rightly guessed that I am Irish by descent. My ancestor, the first of us who came to Spain, fought in Ireland on the losing side in the Jacobite wars. Like many another gentleman he found himself in the end a landless exile. He had little better fortune here. He fought; but while others won fame and fortune, he got neither. He bred his sons to be soldiers like himself. It was the only trade that suited men like them. Some of them were killed, some disappeared; one, my grandfather, married, and in his turn had sons who grew to be soldiers. We have fought, we O'Neills, in every quarrel Spain has had for the last century and a half. Every one of us was a soldier except me. I am the last. I suppose the race is decayed. I am, as you see," he glanced round him with a slight smile, "a poor priest in a very shabby cassock." Antony Butler confessed that he too was an Irishman.

"Ah," said the priest, "and a gentleman. You belong to that new aristocracy which succeeded ours. You were mere foreigners when my people left Ireland. But you call yourself Irish now. Is that so?"

"Yes. We are Irish now, whatever we were once."

"It is strange. You came from England and took

the land for yours. Behold the hand of God! The land you took has taken you and made you hers. I hope you will be more dutiful children to her than we were. We left her under the heel of her foe. I understand that she is under the heel worse than ever now. What are you doing? Have you also run away from her?"

The priest talked far into the night, and the next day begged Antony Butler to stay with him for a week or more.

"I have," he said, "books here about Ireland, and newspapers. I am interested in the country and its destiny, although I do not suppose that I shall ever see it. I should like to talk with you and hear you tell me about the people."

"But I can tell you nothing. I have been out of Ireland for many years, for more years than I care to count."

"Ah! And yet Ireland must be a good country to be in just now. There seems to be an awakening, a renewal of life, a spring time. I think there are men in Ireland now who are thinking great things and feeling nobly."

He brought out from the cupboard in the corner of his room a little bundle of newspapers.

"Look at these," he said. "I cannot read out to you what is in these papers. My knowledge of English is not good enough to give you the swing of the verses or the fall of the prose sentences. You shall read them out to me."

Antony Butler took the papers. They were the earliest numbers of the *Nation*. He read and then re-read aloud first the poems, then the essays and prose articles. The priest listened, now and then explaining

as well as he could the situations with which the articles dealt.

"Did I not tell you," said Father O'Neill, "that there was an awakening?"

Antony Butler read all the papers the priest had. He was immensely attracted by the teaching of the Young Ireland party. Their ideal of a united Ireland, of the blending of antagonistic factions, of Orange and Green, into a mighty nationalism, fascinated him. The rhetorical poetry stirred his blood. He realised the nobility of the ideals of Thomas Davis, and the unselfish devotion of his friends. It seemed to him that in such company he might catch the spirit of the oath his father had sworn for him; that it would no longer be a terrible thing oppressing life, but might become an inspiration; that he might live for it.

The visit to Father O'Neill, the reading in the little Spanish presbytery, and the long talks affected Antony Butler. For another year he led his wandering life, but there grew in him a desire to return to Ireland which in the end became irresistible. He reached Dublin in time to see Thomas Davis before he died. He began, timidly and with great self-distrust, to take some part in the work which Davis' friends and associates carried on. He became acquainted with the leaders of the party, understood and admired their policy.

Then the famine came—the sudden, inexplicable blight of the food crop of the people. Men and women starved. Antony Butler, horror-struck and pitiful, hurried back to the west. He found his own property smitten as all Ireland was smitten. He spent the money he had in buying food. He sold the pictures he had sent home. He slaughtered his own cattle; he borrowed money, mortgaging his property at impos-

sible rates of interest to unwilling lenders. Still the blight lay on the land. Year followed year, and things got worse instead of better. Men and women grew too weak, too hopeless to struggle against the fate that seemed inevitable. They lapsed into hopeless lethargy, and died in noisome cabins among festering corpses or, shrinking from horrors at home, like dogs in ditches by the roadsides. Men like Antony Butler, their money spent, their credit gone, raged impotently against the monstrous iniquity which, under the name of science, permitted shiploads of food to leave the land while the men who grew it starved. Futile schemes of relief were worked with desperate energy, effecting little. Futile schemes of charity were carried out by well-meaning, helpless people. Cowardly men fled from the sight of suffering. Selfish men grew rich, plundering the corpse of Ireland. Brutalised men drank themselves into stupid forgetfulness. The peasants still starved.

Then amid the worst of his misery and despair there came a ray of light into Antony Butler's life. Foolish philanthropists roamed about the land. He shunned them when they came his way. But there came also down to stricken Connacht a man from the north, with money in his pocket and a wise human heart in his breast. Micah Ramsden had gathered a fortune in a grocer's shop in Belfast. He was a Quaker, and went meekly through the world in his broad-brimmed hat and smooth broadcloth, a quaint figure. His conversation was "yea" and "nay," and "thou" and "thee." But he was full of the spirit of the Master whom he served. He realised his savings, left his shop in charge of his daughter, and went forth to the worst parts of the famine-stricken land. He sought no praise from

men, and got no credit for what he did. His name is forgotten now, and no one tells the story of his work. In the end the famine fever seized him as it seized many another man and he died, a serene, quiet man, without fear or passion.

Antony Butler was with him at the end and went north, travelling through a desolate land to carry the news of her father's death to Priscilla Ramsden. He found her, a woman of calm ways and a brave heart, behind the counter of the shop in Belfast. She talked quietly of the father she had lost. She spoke no word, gave apparently no thought to the fortune which ought to have been hers, the money that had been poured forth in the vain struggle against misery. Two months after he first met her Antony Butler asked her to be his wife. At the end of a year she married him and went to her new home. The famine and the fever were over then. The awful exodus of the people began. Antony watched them go with sickening despair. He saw cottages fall to ruin for want of inhabitants, harvested land turned to lonely cattle ranches, a pleasant countryside deserted by its people. His spirit was broken by the failure of his hopes. His health was undermined by the horrors of the famine and the fever. After three years of married life he died, leaving his wife with one boy, a Stephen Butler, and the task of saving, if possible, some part of the Butler estates.

She faced the situation, as she had accepted the news of her father's death, calmly. A Quaker kinsman came to her from the north. Together they went through the tangled record of Antony Butler's affairs. They sold an outlying part of the property, the land which lay east of the village of Cuslough. A Dublin pawn-

broker, one David Snell, bought it at a ridiculously low price. His money stayed the threatenings of the most clamorous creditors. Mrs. Butler went to the north, and rented a little cottage near Hollywood, on the shore of Belfast Lough. She saw clearly that she could not afford to live in Dhulough House, but she believed that she might save the remainder of the property for her son.

CHAPTER III

PRISCILLA BUTLER proved herself a wise woman. She followed the advice of her relatives in all that concerned the management of her son's estate. She could have done nothing better. Old Timothy Davidson, her uncle, was a godly man, but in all that concerned money, the getting or the keeping of it, he was shrewd and keen. He had given the world proof of his qualities. No linen merchant in the north was better spoken of, or bore a higher reputation for probity. Few had acquired and secured more comfortable fortunes. John Tennant, Priscilla's cousin, stood behind the counter of his shop and sold drapery. His goods were sound, his word reliable; and men said that he was growing rich. If these two understood nothing about land, they knew most of what was worth knowing about money. Under their care the revenues of the boy's estate were so managed that debts and mortgages began to melt away.

But in one matter Priscilla Butler would not be advised by any one. She insisted on bringing up her own son herself. Timothy Davidson and John Tennant shook their heads together over the boy. He grew self-willed, was little subject to control, and somewhat inclined to be contemptuous of mature wisdom. On Sunday afternoons Timothy Davidson and his wife used to visit Mrs. Butler in her cottage. It was Timothy's custom to afflict the boy with much advice,

advice given after the manner of Polonius, in polished epigrams. Stephen learned to endure it because six-pences followed the advice. Pears and grapes from the wonderful gardens, on which the old man lavished his money, were given by little Mrs. Davidson and further reconciled the boy to the patient hearing of sound teaching. John Tennant, when he visited his cousin, advised that Stephen should be sent to school. He used to bring with him his little daughter Dorothea; a motherless child, three or four years younger than Stephen. She was quaintly dressed by an old Quaker housekeeper, and taught to be more solemn than is right for any child. When Stephen refused to play with her, declaring that girls were no good for anything, John Tennant, drawing on his imagination, described the joys of school sports and the companionship of other boys. To Mrs. Butler he spoke of the necessity of giving her son a proper education. She listened to him and set herself to learn the Latin language so that she might herself be Stephen's tutor.

What the end of such a system of education would have been is doubtful. Priscilla Butler was stronger willed and calmer than most women, and the boy loved her very well. Perhaps she might have made a good man of him in the end. But when he was fourteen years old she died. Afterwards John Tennant, guardian along with Timothy Davidson, had his way.

"The lad," he said, "is not of our people and will not live after our ways. It is right that we should remember this. Let him be taught in the way that men of his class are taught that he may live among them."

Timothy Davidson was silent for many days. Then he went to John Tennant and said—

"Thou speakest wisely. It shall be as thou hast

planned. It may be that after many years the lad will return to us. In the meanwhile let him go to one of the schools which are accounted best by the world."

Stephen Butler was sent to an English public school, a place with a famous name and great traditions.

The education given at the English public schools in those days was the best in the world. It was indeed likely that a boy would emerge from it with small Latin, less Greek, and a contempt for French. He was almost certain to be ignorant of mathematics and natural science. But if he had any good in him at all he learned to be a gentleman ; that is to say, one fitted to be a leader of other men, either in battle or in politics. The boy from an English public school made an admirable captain of soldiers. He faced physical pain for himself without shrinking, and gazed on the sufferings of others without nausea. He was inured to suffering. Masters birched their pupils frequently. The boys fought battles with each other in which even the victors were hurt a great deal. Bullying was the sport of the strong ; to be bullied the common lot of the weak. Nowadays, thanks to the introduction of anæsthetics in surgery and the recognition of the dignity of surrender in war, a gentleman is no longer called upon to suffer or witness physical torture. Therefore there is no necessity to birch him excessively in his youth, or to encourage him to find pleasure in hurting those weaker than himself. He is still trained, however, just as he was trained then, in the other habits which go to the making of a gentleman. For a gentleman should have good manners, a high opinion of himself, and a capacity for concealing his feelings. The leader in political life must be properly contemptuous of the suffrages of the multitudes he courts. He must

be able to hide anger, disgust, enthusiasm, high hopes, or an altruistic outlook upon life. He must smile when rage is in his heart : dine, without visible discomfort, with notorious liars ; and pretend, when his soul is full of lofty ideals, to be occupied principally in finding room for his own head at the feeding-trough. The public school education is admirable still for the training of such men. It was even better adapted for its purpose fifty years ago.

In Stephen Butler the system produced unusual results. He had a fierce Irish temper, a sensitive pride, and a kind heart. When he was birched he resented it angrily. When he was bullied, he hated the bully with a hatred so vehement that, reckless of appalling consequences, he revenged himself in unheard-of ways. He refused when his time came to bully other people, winning for himself the dislike of his equals and the contempt of those who ought to have been his victims. During his school days he was neither popular nor happy. Yet he gained something. He learned at school, as he might never have learned otherwise, to be brave. And he suffered little loss. Nothing that he endured was able to deprive him of the share of masterful self-assertion which he inherited from his grandfather. The bitterness which came into his life was not enough to destroy the capacity for spiritual emotion which he had from his mother and from intercourse with his mother's people. He went up to Oxford with his Irish heart still whole in him, with the spirituality of the Quaker life still possible for him, with the manners of an English gentleman, but a dislike of English ways and English ideas growing rapidly in his mind.

At Oxford Stephen first realised that he was an Irishman. The Fenian organisation brought the exist-

ence of Irish national feeling once more under public notice. The English people were very indignant. They believed that the Irish question was settled ; that Irishmen were being scattered abroad and in process of being absorbed by other peoples ; that, from a political point of view, Ireland was no more than an extension of England, in which Whigs and Tories would excite themselves over the questions which seemed to be important in London or Liverpool. There was a general gasp of amazement when it was discovered that some Irishmen at home and abroad were still willing to take guns in their hands and fight for an unintelligible conception which they called nationality. Amazement gave way to fury when a policeman was shot in Manchester. The English people were able to view the murder of Irish landlords and the execution of Irish tenants with equanimity. There is no need to get excited about the way barbarous people treat each other. But an English policeman is a sacred animal, and when he is seated in a prison van, with the keys of a black door in his pocket, he represents, more obviously even than the judge in his ermine, the majesty of law. The van itself is a kind of ark of the covenant on which no man shall lay impious hands unpunished. That Irishmen should have dared to shoot off a pistol in the presence of a policeman, and that the bullet from the pistol should actually kill him was an apocalyptic horror. Public opinion demanded that several victims should be sacrificed on the gallows.

At such times of general excitement, the position of the Irish gentleman in close association with men of his own class in England is a peculiarly difficult one. Stephen Butler had no wish himself to shoot any one, least of all a policeman. He had no desire to blow up

a prison or to invade Canada. He did not understand the sentiment of nationality which urged men to do such deeds. But he was an Irishman and, since he had been frequently kicked at school for saying so, very proud of the fact. He found that unless he denounced his own countrymen in language more violent than that of the English themselves, he was likely to be looked on as one who sympathised with monstrous and unnatural crime. The choice, as it appeared to Stephen, was between losing his own self-respect and losing the respect of other people. He decided without hesitation that of the two his self-respect was the better worth keeping. Having chosen, he went on to emphasise his choice by defending the reputation of the men who were hanged for shooting the policeman. This was more than any one, even his best friends, could stand. He became unpopular. No doubt he would have regained his friends and his position in the society of the college after a while. Unless he is worked up to a pitch of unusual excitement the Englishman, and especially the English gentleman, is wonderfully tolerant of eccentric opinions. It would always have been believed that Stephen Butler admired those who murdered policemen; but in calm times, when the locks were not being shot off the doors of prison vans, his peculiar taste in heroes would have been forgiven, even prized as a picturesque national characteristic. But Stephen did not stay at Oxford long enough to enjoy the reaction in his favour.

News came to him that his guardian and great-uncle, old Timothy Davidson, had died suddenly. He returned to Belfast to attend the funeral. John Tennant, then a very prosperous draper with a new villa of his own at the foot of the Cave Hill, received Stephen as

his guest. It appeared that Timothy Davidson had left behind him a considerable, a very considerable, sum of money. Part of it was willed to Stephen. John Tennant advised him gravely about the use that should be made of it.

"We have so managed your affairs for you that there are now only small charges upon the income of your estate."

John Tennant stood half-way between the old and the new Quakers. He discarded the broad-brimmed hats his father and old Timothy Davidson wore, but he affected a sombre severity of attire which marked him off from ordinary Christians. In speaking to members of the society to which he belonged he used the "thous" and "thees" of the older generation. In conversation with outsiders like Stephen Butler, he accommodated his speech to the common use of plural pronouns.

"I should recommend," he said, "that this money which comes to you from our uncle Timothy should be used to pay off the remainder of the mortgages on your property. You are now of full age, and it is for you to do what seems right in your own eyes ; but this is what I advise, and this, I think, is what our uncle Timothy would have wished."

Stephen, although he was twenty-two years of age, had left the management of his property in the hands of his guardians. He was content to continue receiving the allowance they gave him when he first went to the university. He had no wish to dispute the wisdom of John Tennant's advice.

"But there is more than sufficient money for this purpose. I have gone into the matter very carefully. I find that when everything is paid you will have

several hundred pounds of our uncle Timothy's money left, and you will also have a large income—an income of more than two thousand a year of your own."

John Tennant paused to allow the importance of this announcement to have its due effect. A prosperous shopkeeper who has worked hard and saved carefully is in a position to appreciate the value of an income of two thousand pounds a year. He was anxious that Stephen should appreciate it too. But John Tennant was a Quaker, a member of a society which has consistently and steadily maintained a very literal and therefore highly spiritual conception of the meaning of Christ's words. Therefore he did not look upon a large income precisely as most successful shopkeepers do. He regarded it in the first place not as a means of indulgence, but as a heavy responsibility. He gave simple and unaffected expression to his views.

"You will have a great deal of power, Stephen, either for good or evil. I hope that you will use it well. The possession of money always brings with it power; but money which comes from a landed estate brings with it more power than money like mine or our uncle Timothy's. You have under you men—men with wives and families dependent on them—whom you may treat justly or unjustly, wisely or foolishly."

It was curious that Stephen, with all his pride and independence of spirit, should have listened without protest, should have listened even reverently, to the platitudes of this somewhat pompous, very imperfectly educated draper. The power of simple sincerity is very great. John Tennant had no art in sermonising, no freshness of view, no wisdom or philosophy to impart. But he was absolutely, unmistakably sincere, and Stephen listened to him.

"I hope that your education has fitted you for the management of your estate. So far as the income of it is concerned we have managed well for you. But we have not known or taken care of the men who made the money out of your land. We could not do that, for we knew nothing of such matters. Only we saw to it that they should not be overburdened with rent, or deprived for your sake of a fair reward for their toil. You must do much more than we have done if you wish to do your duty. I cannot advise you about this further than to repeat to you the words of God: 'Do justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly.'"

This was the sum of the Quaker's advice. He did not press decision or immediate action on Stephen. He neither suggested a return to Oxford nor a visit to Dhulough. Men of John Tennant's society learn patience and self-restraint by sitting quiet in their churches, neither reciting liturgies nor declaiming doctrines. Stephen remained, untroubled, a guest in the new villa, until he made up his own mind about his future.

"I think, Cousin John," he said at last, "that I shall not return to college."

He waited, but John Tennant expressed neither approval nor disapproval.

"If you will continue to act for me," Stephen went on, "and if you can supply me with sufficient money, I should like to go abroad for a while, for a year or two, and travel."

"It is well," said John Tennant. "I shall arrange about your affairs and act for you as before until your return."

CHAPTER IV

DINNER was over. The cloth, after the custom still prevalent in 1875, was removed, and the mahogany table shone pleasantly in the light of the candles, reflecting tall decanters, many wine-glasses and dishes of apples and filbert nuts. Three men sat round it. John Manders, the host, was at the head of the table. Beside him a bottle of port reclined in a basket. A screw fitted to a lever already pierced the cork, waiting the pressure of his hand. Before him was a bottle of whisky, a lemon, sugar, and a large china bowl with a silver ladle in it. On the hob beside the fire a kettle sang. John Manders was a young man, not more than thirty-five years of age, tall, well built, and handsome in a florid style. He had the manners of a gentleman, and clear bright eyes with a look in them that convinced most men that John Manders was afraid of nothing on earth, and probably very little inclined to give way to the will of any one who might claim the right to command him from heaven. The other two men were older. One, Lord Daintree, was perhaps sixty years of age, but because he was spare, upright, and exceedingly well dressed, looked youthful still. He owned a large property which he had visited once since his boyhood. Hunting and shooting attracted him very little, and Connacht had no other pleasures to offer. He had spent his life in the diplomatic ser-

vice, preferring the society of courts to that of country squires. But of courts, and even the reputation acquired by frequenting them, there comes satiety at last, and Lord Daintree, meditating the publication of a book of reminiscences, sought quiet. Where could peace be secured more certainly than in western Connacht? Therefore the fine old house was opened again, servants imported from England, and Lord Daintree found himself the guest of his agent, Mr. Manders. The third man was a portly, grey-whiskered clergyman. He wore the great white tie which distinguished the Irish parson in the days before he discovered that he believed in the Holy Catholic Church, and took to wearing a collar like a dog's to emphasise his catholicity. The Very Reverend Dean Ponsonby had dined to his satisfaction. He cracked filbert nuts and sipped his glass of port in a leisurely fashion. He spoke as men do who are accustomed to be listened to with respect.

"I said, my Lord, and I said it with emphasis, let us expunge all traces of popery from the Prayer Book. I voted dead against the Athanasian Creed. I voted in favour of a revision, a root and branch revision, of the Baptismal Service. I proposed a canon which I think would have prevented the wearing of cassocks by our clergy. But it wasn't passed."

"Ah!" said Lord Daintree; "now I should have supposed that the cassock, a species of coat as I understand, might have been left to the option of the wearer. It is surely——"

"It is," said the clergyman, "the mark of the beast, the thin end of the wedge, the beginning of the end."

John Manders, who had listened with patience to a long description of the debates which resulted in the revised Prayer Book of the disestablished Church of

Ireland, began to feel bored. He drew the cork of the bottle beside him, and the pleasant gurgle of wine flowing into a decanter silenced the clergyman for a moment. When he began to speak again his subject was finance. Words quite strange to Lord Daintree and phrases which bore little meaning to his mind came easily from the Dean's lips. "Commuted and compounded," "Assessment," "Diocesan Scheme," "Commuted and cut." From the severity of the clergyman's tone it was apparent that to commute and cut was a villainous series of actions. An individual stated to have been contemplating such iniquity had been cast from the society of decent men.

"What about Hegarty?" asked Mr. Manders. "Have you got him into your scheme yet?"

"Hegarty," said the parson solemnly, "is little better than a fool."

"His wife's a pretty woman," said Mr. Manders, "and very good fun. I like Mrs. Hegarty, and I've no objection to her husband being a fool."

The Dean pondered the remark. Then, not to be diverted from his estimate of Mr. Hegarty's character by any suggestion of his wife's personal charm, he went on—

"Hegarty's living is a beggarly thing, not worth more than a couple of hundred a year. I told him he'd have no chance of promotion unless he commuted and compounded and came in with the rest of us. There's no use his standing out by himself. But the man can't be got to understand or take the smallest interest in finance. What do you think he said to me when I tried to explain the advantage of our scheme? 'Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.' Now what do you think of a man who could

make such an answer as that when I was talking business?"

"A fool," said Lord Daintree; "obviously a fool. As great a fool as St. Paul."

The Dean frowned. St. Paul was part of the Bible, and the Bible was an inspired book. And yet it was obvious that in a disestablished church thought must be taken—— John Manders saved him from the horns of a dilemma.

"Mrs. Hegarty manages all right about the raiment," said he. "Last summer she came out in a green silk gown, like Solomon in all his glory for splendour. I told her how pretty she looked, and after mincing and mouthing, she confessed where she got it. Now, Mr. Dean, no tales out of school. There was an old chest in the rectory full of silk hangings for the church, green and red and white silk, yards and yards of them. I fancy Antony Butler, the man that married the Quaker and died just after the famine, must have brought them back from abroad. He was half a Papist they say, and liked such things. Anyway they were never used since he died till the gay Carry Hegarty thought of cutting them up into gowns for her pretty back. She began with the green one. She'll look mighty fine, as I told her, when she gets to the white. Hegarty's such a dreamer I don't suppose he'd know what she wore or where she got it, unless she took to cutting up his surplices into shifts."

Lord Daintree smiled. "I trust," he said, "that she won't be reduced to such extremities."

The Dean puffed his cheeks out, preparing to protest.

"Now, Mr. Dean, remember," said Mr. Manders, "no tales to the bishop. Honour bright. This is between

gentlemen over their wine. It goes no further. I can't have poor Carrie Hegarty worried. Besides, you know, silk hangings are d—d ritualistic things. You wouldn't like to see a woman's petticoat taken off her and hung up behind the altar? Come now, would you? And that's what the bishop would have to do if he did anything. Fill your glass now. You're not drinking. I'll have no heel taps here, and it's time to be mixing the punch."

The Dean allowed himself to be pacified. Church property in the days immediately following disestablishment was not always regarded as sacred by its custodians. Odd things happened, even to outlying pieces of land, and it was really impossible to look strictly after such things as disused altar hangings.

"Hegarty told me," said the Dean, after he had received his tumbler of punch, "that young Butler is coming to live here. Is that true? You're agent for the property and ought to know."

"It's true enough," said Manders; "he arrived yesterday. I haven't seen him yet, but I hope to God he'll have some sense now he's of age and taking the management of his own affairs. It's awkward for me having a property under-rented alongside of yours, Lord Daintree, and Snell's bit of land. I've told the trustees, Stephen Butler's trustees, you know, fifty times that the rents could be raised thirty per cent all round. The beggars could pay it if they had to. Your fellows pay all right, Lord Daintree, and so do Snell's, who really are a bit racked. But those Belfast Quakers were as obstinate as mules. Not a penny more they'd allow to be put on the tenants. The result is that the man across the fence, your man, Lord Daintree, is for ever grumbling, because he sees the other fellow getting his

land for less than its proper value. And as for Snell's people, who have more to pay than they can well manage—— It's the devil managing the three properties as they stand."

"Some day," said Lord Daintree, "there will be trouble over this Irish land. We're putting on the screw too tight, Manders."

"You're not," said the agent. "Your property is set at about its proper value. But of course you needn't take the money unless you like."

"Oh, I'll take it," said Lord Daintree. "As a landlord I take what I can get. I want every penny of it, and more if I could get it. Don't think I intend to reduce my rents. But speaking as a man with some little experience of the world outside Ireland, I say there'll be trouble, serious trouble, one of these days. I hope the present condition of things will last out my time. Anyway, I shan't mind. If there's any shooting done, I shall get out of range, and shall take good care to keep out of range. You'll have to stand fire, Manders. It's hideously unjust. They pay and shoot. You gather and get shot. I spend and enjoy myself. Very unjust; but that's the way of the world. Only mark my words. There'll be trouble."

"Of course," said the Dean, "there'll be trouble. Once the rights of property are interfered with there will be no damming the stream of socialism, anarchy, and spoliation. The Church's property went first. The landlord's will go next. The man who laid sacrilegious hands upon the one won't hesitate about the other."

"They couldn't do it," said Manders. "No Government would or could attempt such a thing. It was all well enough robbing a lot of parsons. Parsons can't

fight. But the landlords would be a different matter. No man will ever see a British Government interfere with freedom of contract between the owner and the occupier."

"You probably won't see it," said Lord Daintree, "because, as I said before, you'll be shot. It will be the shooting of a few men like you that will bring the matter up. Then——"

"Once property in any form is interfered with," repeated the Dean, "there is no knowing what the end will be."

He went on to deliver a discourse on the theme of the rights of property, and the iniquity of Mr. Gladstone, who first taught the English people to deny their sacredness.

"I think," said Lord Daintree, yawning, "that I must go down and call upon young Stephen Butler."

"Impress upon him," said the clergyman, "that it is his duty as a landlord to stand by the Church in the present crisis, that he ought to subscribe, and subscribe liberally, to the funds."

"And if you get the chance," said Mr. Manders, "tell him that he ought to let me screw his rents up a bit. It's awkward, very awkward, for me, managing the three estates as they stand."

"What sort of income has he?" asked Lord Daintree.

"Oh, between two and three thousand clear," said the agent. "It's not a big estate, but there are no charges on it and hardly a mortgage. It has been nursed ever since his father died. The widow lived on deuced little, and every penny that wasn't spent on the boy's education went on clearing off the charges. I fancy he got some sort of legacy lately. Anyhow, he has his income clear now."

"Lucky man," said Lord Daintree. "If I were in his position I'd cut down my rents. But how can I with all the infernal mortgage interest to be paid and a son like mine? A young fellow in the Guards is pretty expensive. I can't sacrifice a penny."

"To-morrow," said the Dean with some solemnity, "is Sunday. I always make it a point to get to bed early on Saturday nights. I like to be fresh for my day's work. Manders, will you be so good as to order my car? I told my man to go round to your yard."

"The Dean," said Lord Daintree, when the clergyman had left, "is a little inclined to be prosy, but he seems to be a gentleman. Is he a fair specimen of his kind?"

"There are worse men than old Ponsonby," said Manders. "He runs straight. I never knew him do a crooked turn to man or woman. And the people like him."

"Oh, the people! I thought there were next to no Protestant people in these parts."

"No more there are. Hegarty, for instance, the man we were speaking of, hasn't above a dozen in his parish, and I never saw more than twenty or thirty in old Ponsonby's church—his cathedral, I beg its pardon—any time I was there, and I generally am there of a Sunday morning. When I said the people liked him, I meant the Roman Catholics—your tenants, Lord Daintree, and Snell's. He's uncommonly liberal to them. He's pretty well off, you know, apart from his parish, and it's a good one; I suppose because the church has the name of being a cathedral. It's not once nor twice that I've known him put his hand in his pocket and pay up the rent for some poor devil that I should have had to evict otherwise. I don't set up to be over and

above pious myself, but I'll give my subscription to the church so long as there are men like Ponsonby in it. I wish there were more like him. But I'm afraid. In the future, what with reduced stipends and loss of social position, we shan't get that stamp of man. We'll have more like Hegarty. He's a fool as Ponsonby said, and worse. He's a Methodist in his heart. It's no good asking him to dinner. I asked him once, and he proposed to have what he called family prayers afterwards. Prayers are all right, of course, at the proper time, but I don't call it decent to pray after dinner. Besides, he's queer in other ways. He spends hours with an old madman who lives on an island away off opposite Dhulough, a fellow that once was a sort of school-master, and then was mixed up with the Fenians and got five years in gaol. After he came out he wandered about the country for a while and finally squatted on the island. I suppose I ought to have turned him off, but I never did. What the deuce Hegarty finds to talk to him about I can't imagine. I dropped him a hint one day that a Fenian wasn't very respectable company. But I didn't like to worry him. After all, his wife's a very pretty woman. I hear she's the daughter of some half-pay officer. She's not precisely a lady; knocked about too much in barracks in the days of her youth to be a lady now. I can't think why she married Hegarty."

"Perhaps," said Lord Daintree, "she is like me, tired of the gaiety of the great world; seeking peace."

Mr. Manders winked. "Mrs. Hegarty," he said, "is not yet on the retired list."

CHAPTER V

THE Sunday which followed the evening of Mr. Manders' dinner party proved to be the worst sort of day. The wind swept in across the sea from the south-west, beating torrents of rain against walls and windows which obstructed its way, soaking sodden the thatch of cottages and the bare fields. The little rectory was beaten and buffeted. The road to the church lay ankle deep in mire. At eight o'clock, Eugene Hegarty, his porridge eaten, retired to his study and locked his door.

It is said that you can know a man by the inanimate things with which he chooses to surround himself. None so poor but, if he has a room at all which he can call his own, manages somehow to impress his individuality upon it. The pictures he chooses to look at, the books he chooses to keep, the kind of chair he chooses to sit in, the table at which he writes, the gun or fishing-rod standing in the corner, the slippers by the fireside, the dog on the hearth-rug, the scattered papers or neatly packed pigeon-holes will reveal to the seeing eye the nature of the man. No doubt when a man, married excessively, loses his individuality in his family, getting absorbed, as it were, in bustling wife and many children, his own room, like his own soul, is neglected and desolate. There are men who have been trained and worried into thinking it a duty to spend their spare

hours with their families. They play innocent card games or read out books they do not care about to children who secretly despise them, and wives who tolerate them as necessary incumbrances of life. You cannot tell anything about these men by looking at the rooms they live in. But that is because they have ceased in any real sense to be men, having become instead fathers of families.

Eugene Hegarty had met no such fate. His soul was his own, and his room. He need scarcely have troubled to lock the door of it. There was no one who wanted to disturb his privacy. Neither his wife nor the dragged maid ever entered his study if they could help it. He had free scope to make what he liked of the room. And a wise man, entering it, would have known Eugene Hegarty; might have guessed even the lean face, the thin, black beard, and the narrow, long-fingered hands; would have been certain of the colourless, large eyes which seemed to look past or through the material things before them. In the middle of the room stood a bare deal table, ink spotted. On it lay a small bottle of faded ink and a badly mended quill pen. The man was no great writer though he had dropped ink on his table. There was also a Bible, well worn with constant use, a copy of *The Imitation of Christ*, and, strange in a Protestant clergyman's study, a small iron cross. Mr. Manders had called him methodistical. He meant, for Mr. Manders used ecclesiastical phraseology in a loose, popular manner, that Mr. Hegarty was righteous overmuch. The typical Methodist does not nourish his soul on Thomas à Kempis and the image of the cross. There was no carpet on the floor, but at one end of the room lay a small mat worn threadbare in the middle by the knees of the man who knelt on it for many hours

every day. Above it hung a small picture, the only one in the room. It represented the Good Shepherd disentangling a pitifully stupid-looking sheep from a thicket of vicious thorns. In a small bookcase were some college text-books, very dusty, an old Latin Commentary on the Psalms and some thin brown volumes, well read, whose titles ran lengthways up their backs—*Christ is All, Genesis* ; *Christ is All, Exodus* ; *Christ is All, Leviticus*. Eugene Hegarty was a man who expected to discover Christ in unlikely places. There were also two plain wooden chairs. Under the window stood a ponderous iron chest, secured with two padlocks. A brass plate on its lid announced that it had been presented to the parish of Dhulough in 1820 by Stephen Butler and was meant for the safe keeping of church plate and church documents.

Eugene Hegarty unlocked first one padlock, then the other. Slipping the clasps over the staples he slowly raised the lid. It was very heavy and the man was not strong. He paused, his pale face slightly flushed with the exertion. Then he took one by one from their green baize bags and laid on the table a silver flagon, chalice, and paten, the communion vessels of his church. He took the flagon in his hands, crossed the room to where his mat lay, and knelt in prayer. Then rising he carefully polished the vessel with a soft cloth. Again he knelt, this time with the chalice. His lips moved, and during the first half of the prayer his words were audible—

“What shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that He hath done unto me? I will take the cup of salvation.”

He rose and with the utmost reverence rubbed the chalice till it shone brightly. Once more he knelt,

holding the paten in both hands, and prayed, partly silently, partly aloud.

Then he left the room, returned, and brought with him a rough basket, woven of unpeeled osier rods, like the creels which the countrymen have for the backs of their donkeys and their wives. He wrapped the silver vessels in their baize coverings again, and stowed them very carefully on the clean straw in the bottom of the basket. Over all he laid a white cloth, and then, for the rain was falling heavily and he had to carry them to the church, a brown sack.

It was nearly eleven o'clock. He climbed the narrow staircase and entered his wife's room. The days were generally too long for Mrs. Hegarty. A childless woman, she had little in the way of occupation or amusement at Dhulough. The pleasure of dressing herself grew stale unless there was some chance of Mr. Manders admiring her when dressed. She decked her drawing-room with such ornaments as she could collect, and with the numerous mats and antimacassars she had ample time to make. She pulled its suite of furniture about, pushing a crooked sofa now against one wall, now against another, and draping it in various ways with a bright, knitted sofa blanket. But there was never any one to notice what she did except Mr. Manders, so the joy of doing things palled. When her husband entered the room the débris of her breakfast on the tray, brought up to her by a slatternly, bare-footed maid, lay on the foot of the bed. She turned her head on the pillow as the door opened. She looked very young as she lay there with a white coverlet over her, and her mass of gold hair drawn back from her face and plaited. It was easy to see why John Manders admired her. Her great blue eyes looked peevishly at

her husband, but it was possible to imagine them filled with a very different expression, an expression attractive to most men.

"Caroline," he spoke timidly, "you ought surely to be getting up. It is very late."

"What's the good of getting up on a day like this? Listen to the rain against the windows."

"But are you not coming to church?"

"Church! Don't be absurd, Eugene. How can you expect me to go to church in such weather? I should be soaked to the skin and my dress destroyed. Besides, there will be nobody there."

"You must have forgotten, Caroline, that this is Sacrament Sunday."

It was Eugene Hegarty's custom to administer the sacrament to such of his people as cared to receive it once in every month. Sometimes, for he had very few parishioners, only one or two waited for the part of the service which followed the sermon. Then, to the great grief of the clergyman, there was no sacrament. His own soul revolted against the starvation imposed upon it, but Eugene Hegarty was loyal to the law of his Church. Now on this fiercely wet day he knew that no one was likely to be in church except old Dogherty the sexton, and his deaf wife. Others, sheep scattered through a wide wilderness, had far to come, and would not face the inevitable soaking. He greatly desired that his wife should be there.

"I think," he said, "that you ought to come, Caroline."

"Please don't worry me," she said. "I don't want to catch a bad cold, and I have no thick boots. Get me a Prayer Book, Eugene, and I'll read the service through for myself. I promise, really and truly. And you

know that's just as good as if I went to church. I've often heard you say that it doesn't matter where we say our prayers. And bed's much more comfortable. It makes me shiver to think of that draughty church. I'll be up and dressed before you get home, and I'll have dinner ready and a good fire for you."

Her eyes lost their look of peevishness. She smiled at him just as she had smiled years before when she promised to marry him. Her face had all the appeal in it which a child's has when he begs for some forbidden sweetmeat ; and she was a beautiful woman. Eugene Hegarty sighed. Once he had believed that her smiles were the outward expression of a beautiful soul within, a soul innocent and spiritual, the home of lofty feeling. Now he knew—but the thought was never allowed to form itself in his mind. He clung bravely to the ideal he had formed of the woman he loved. Yet if he had allowed himself to examine her as keenly as he daily examined himself he would have known that his wife, for all her smiles and large blue eyes, was pitifully selfish and very vain.

"Get me the Prayer Book, dear ; and do pull the cover of the dressing-table straight before you go. I asked Bridie to do it, but she's so stupid she only made it worse, and it worries me to look at it."

He went over to the table and pulled at the draperies which covered the bare deal beneath. There was a stiff, orange-coloured fabric and over it folds of muslin. In his efforts he plucked too hard and tore a flounce of this thin stuff. He looked round at his wife, half frightened, expecting that she would scold him ; for this dressing-table was, next to her drawing-room, Caroline Hegarty's chief pride. On it she laid china trays with patterns of pink flowers on them, a china

box, and a ring stand. The china box held cold cream, then a fashionable unguent. On one of the branches of the ring stand hung a gold ring with small blue stones in it. Her watch was propped up in a frame made of yellow wood. There was also a tortoise-shell comb, a hand mirror framed in rosewood, and a hairbrush with an ivory back. The whole display witnessed to the fact that Caroline Hegarty cherished one ideal. She liked to be able to think of herself as a dainty woman.

"Stupid fellow," she said; but she still smiled. "Don't meddle with it any more. Run and get the Prayer Book. There's no harm done. I can sew it up to-morrow."

Eugene Hegarty wrapped himself in an old frieze coat, rolled up the legs of his trousers and tramped down the road to his church. The little bell, rung in irregular short trots with pauses between them, greeted him when he came within a hundred yards of the building. He entered it with the precious basket on his arm. Old Dogherty stood in the porch, tugging manfully at the bell-rope. He gave a cheerful greeting—shouted it, being accustomed to conversation with a deaf wife.

"A wet day, your reverence. Maybe now, you mightn't be giving us the Litany, seeing there'll not likely be anybody here but herself and me."

Inside, Mrs. Dogherty stretched her lean, wrinkled hands towards the turf fire which blazed in a huge grate placed, perhaps as a symbol of the upward aspirations proper to everything in the sacred building, some five feet off the ground in a hole in the wall. She also greeted the clergyman—

"Your reverence must be wet. Sure, you won't be

bothered reading the Litany to-day, when there's nobody in church but old Jimmy and myself. You'll be catching your death in your wet clothes; and then what would Mrs. Hegarty say to us?"

Evidently Mr. and Mrs. Dogherty had agreed beforehand about the Litany.

"But see now, your reverence; I have the surplice airing for you before the fire. And I put a new button on the neck of it. The steam that came out of it would surprise you. You might have wrung the water from it. It's wonderful the damp that's in it."

The surplice hung on the back of a pew, spread, an amazing width of linen, before the fire. Mr. Hegarty rolled it up and allowed Mrs. Dogherty to put his great-coat in its place. Then he unpacked his basket and carried the vessels up the aisle. The square flag-stones under his feet sweated moisture. The gate of the chancel rails stuck fast with damp, and needed a strong push to open it. The three limestone steps which led up to the altar were stained with patches of green. The red altar-cloth was moth-eaten in places; the linen covering above it was limp with damp, and spotted here and there with ironmoulds. Behind the altar, very rusty now, were the metal hooks driven into the wall to support the dossell hangings with which Antony Butler had decked the church many years ago. Otherwise, save for the general dilapidation, all was as it had been on the day when Stephen Butler had sworn his oath of perpetual hostility to the power of England.

Suddenly the voice of old Jimmy Dogherty rang clear through the building.

"Is it a seat, your honour? Faith, and what would hinder us from accommodating a gentleman like yourself? It's the seat belonging to Dhulough House you

want. Well, now, sorra the man nor woman has sat in it this twenty years. But it's there waiting for the family that has a right to it. And aren't you the young master himself? Sure, I might have known you'd be coming to the old church so soon as you set foot in the country."

Eugene Hegarty turned. Old Dogherty had dropped the bell-rope and was proceeding like a crab sideways up the aisle. Mrs. Dogherty, dimly aware, in spite of her deafness, that the stranger was some great one, stood curtsying beside the fire. A tall young man followed Dogherty. Reverence for the building he entered struggled in him with a keen appreciation of the grotesqueness of the welcome offered him. A smile flickered, was checked, and then flickered again on his face.

"There's the pew belonging to the family," said Dogherty. "Right under the holy pulpit itself. A fine square pew it is, and a table in the middle of it. Wait now, your honour, wait till I give it a bit of a dust. If I'd known you were thinking of coming I'd have had out the red curtains that your father—a fine gentleman he was—did have hanging round him the way people wouldn't be looking at him and him saying his prayers. I have them safe. Well do I remember taking them down after the funeral. It was my father was sexton in those days."

Eugene Hegarty retired quickly to his vestry room. The arrival of young Stephen Butler in the church excited him strangely. Many a time he had heard the story of this boy's grandfather and his strange oath, sworn there before the very altar which faced the young man. It seemed to him as if this Stephen Butler had come there for no other purpose than to accept the

inheritance of hopeless struggle bequeathed to him ; as if he, Eugene Hegarty, was that day to lay the old curse upon this fresh soul. His hands trembled as he tried to fit Mrs. Dogherty's new surplice button into a hole plainly too small for it. Then, without the usual preliminary knock, Dogherty opened the vestry-room door and thrust in his head.

"Your reverence," he said, in a whisper hardly less audible than his previous shouts, "it might be as well if you were to read the Litany after all. It would look decenter like. And, maybe, he wouldn't like the bit about all the nobility and gentry not to be said. And, your reverence, it's five minutes off the hour, but it would be better not to be delaying. The likes of the quality don't care to be kept waiting for their prayers any more than for their dinners."

Eugene Hegarty read the morning service through, and the old sexton repeated the responses. Neither of them thought attentively of the words they said. Both their minds were fixed on young Stephen Butler, sitting, kneeling, or standing in the great square pew under the pulpit. To Dogherty the day was one of pride and joy. He saw again one of the old stock, the real ancient gentry, of whose strange doings he told tales inherited from his father and grandfather. But to Hegarty the young man's figure was altogether a pathetic one. The face he saw before him was fair to look at, full of honesty and courage. Life was all before this Stephen Butler, life with promise of good and joy. What would come of it? Did he know, this confident youth, of the pledge taken for him? When he knew would he accept or repudiate it? Would he laugh at his grandfather's passion and the pathos of his father's life? So no doubt he might spend his days

pleasantly as others of his class did, eating and drinking, riding after hounds, shooting birds, proclaiming and preserving the rights of gentlemen and land-owners. Eugene Hegarty was himself a Celt, a dreamer and a mystic, a man for whom things seen were of far less importance than the things which, feeling after, he did not see. It seemed to him unspeakably sad to think that no more than that should come of the life of the young man before him. Reading aloud the entirely familiar words of the Church service, he fell to wondering whether it were in this Stephen Butler to feel fiercely as his grandfather had felt, or tenderly as his father had, for Ireland. So, certainly, there would lie before him hard and steep ways. Eugene Hegarty, Celt and dreamer, child of a beaten race, knew that sadness comes down like a cloud in the end over the lover of Ireland. The pathos of the man who sees, but sees with tearful eyes, is only one degree less intense than that of the life of him who does not weep because his eyes are blind.

The service neared its end. The time came when the three worshippers knelt at the altar rails and Eugene Hegarty, with the paten in his hand, bearing the consecrated bread which was for his soul and theirs the body of the Crucified, stood before them. He approached Stephen Butler and began to speak the words wherewith the inestimable benefit is conveyed to the faithful man. He faltered and stopped; began to speak again, and then by press of intense emotion became dumb. The young man kneeled with bowed head and outstretched hands, waiting. But Eugene Hegarty could not speak. At last, wondering at the long silence, Stephen Butler raised his head. The eyes of the two men met. It seemed to the clergyman that

he saw suddenly through the eyes of the man before him into the soul behind them. There was no longer any doubt in his mind. Here was one capable of devotion to a lost cause, one who would not shrink from the toil and pain which came from such devotion. At last he was able to speak, and did speak clearly, manfully, the wonderful words. He laid in the outstretched hands the Body of the Lord.

The remainder of the service was for him full of splendid emotion. That which comes to others sometimes in the high places of the Church, where organs sound gloriously and clear voices sing, where shafts of stone rise heavenward and arches are lofty, came to him there in the tattered, woefully bedraggled little church. The wind swept round it. The rain, oozing through cracked window-panes, trickled down the walls. Old Dogherty's hoarse voice followed his, quavering. But it was the angels' song he repeated, in the spirit of the angels themselves : "Glory be to God on high."

Kneeling for the first time before the altar of the old church at Dhulough, Stephen Butler realised more clearly than ever before, more clearly even than he did when his Quaker guardian admonished him, the greatness of the kingdom into which he had entered, the weight of responsibility which lay upon him. He knew that he was free, in a way that most men are not free, to do great things, good and bad. He was free because he was spared the necessity of earning bread to eat ; because he was under no necessity of seeking the approval of master or superior ; because he was not dependent on the judgments that men might pass upon him. He understood that he had thrust on him a position of leadership, a possibility of great influence. He desired then to do only what was right and brave ;

to make honourable use of his wealth and position. It was this desire which Eugene Hegarty had seen in his eyes when he gave him the sacrament. It was their fellowship in the capacity for spiritual emotion which had made them friends before they spoke to each other.

Stephen walked home through the rain and the storm. Coming near the house he heard the sea raging against the shore, rolling and dragging stones, worn round by ages of its fury, up and down the steep beach, making a hollow roaring. He saw the haggard trees, bent, battered, torn, and their fresh leaves scorched with salt spray. The lake behind the house when he passed it was turbulent and brown. The house itself stood like a cowed thing, resisting the violence of wind and rain doggedly, as it had resisted such storms for more than a hundred years. Stephen himself found a joy in struggling against the storm. He passed the house, forced his way with bent head to the beach, and stood staring out into the welter of the sea. Sponges of tough yellow spume, torn from their quivering rest in some pool, whirled through the air, struck him in the face or were borne past him across the short wiry grass against the windows of the house behind. He was filled with a wild sense of exultation, a longing even to strip himself and go in to battle with the waves which seemed so strong and angry. He felt vaguely a desire to prove himself stronger than they were, to assert the mastery which he, a man, had over all their rudeness. He picked up great stones, and with both hands flung them against approaching waves. He watched their splash as they struck the water, and heard the hollow tone of their impact with other stones beneath the surface. Suddenly a wave larger than any

before rushed up the beach, caught him, for he would not run from it, surrounded him, and wet him ankle high. He felt the stones beneath his feet quake, and then roll as the wave receding dragged them down. He staggered, clutched at the air, and fell. When he rose he was soaked with salt water to the skin. The wind chilled him. He turned and walked back to the house.

Within there was warmth, and the comfortable sound of rain and storm beating in useless rage against the windows. The storm excited him strangely. Dried, fed, and warmed he sat all the afternoon at the window of the library. He had a book in his hand but he did not open it. The scene outside, the glimpse of the wild sea, the long line of surf, the driving rain, and the ceaseless tumult fascinated him. It was not until long after dark that he allowed the curtains to be drawn and the lamp lit.

CHAPTER VI

IT has been noted in comic papers and elsewhere that all the inhabitants of England, Ireland, and Scotland talk about the weather when they meet each other. Their conduct in this respect is entirely natural, because the eccentricities of the climate of these islands positively clamour for remark. The superior people in Great Britain, the people of education and culture, despise those who talk about the weather, holding the topic to be a cheap one. In Ireland nobody regards a remark about the weather as contemptible. We do not any of us suppose that we are educated or cultured. On the contrary, we are never tired of clamouring for education and appealing to the gentlemen at Westminster, who kindly manage our affairs, to provide us with universities and schools. Also our weather is really much more remarkable even than the kind they have in England. It is less disciplined. It partakes of that roistering and thoroughly inconsistent character which the Victorian novelists declare to be natural to our people. In England things called anti-cyclones occasionally take possession of the sky, and then there are several consecutive days of sunshine or frost. In Ireland, and especially in the west of Ireland, an anti-cyclone is as rare as a capitalist. Good, steady, fixed weather hardly ever comes to Connacht. Probably it is afraid to come. Like other stable and respectable

things and people it seems to have accepted the belief that we are a fickle and naughty people, who would boycott or otherwise ill-treat it if it did come. Very likely it reads *The Times*. A thing with a fine, high-sounding name like anti-cyclone ought to read *The Times*, and if it does its avoidance of Ireland is quite natural.

Yet our freakish weather is not without its charm. On Sunday in Dhulough, and generally over the region west of the Shannon, a storm raged exceedingly. It dragged green leaves off the trees and scattered them. When the leaves, being young and tenacious of life, refused to be dragged, it broke off the twigs on which they grew. It battered all things with chilly deluges of rain. On Monday morning the weather repented and became unexpectedly gentle and delightful. The leaves which survived spread themselves in the sunshine, and the birds, rejoicing in a quiet which made it possible for them to hear each other, sang outrageously cheerful songs.

"There is," said Father Staunton to his housekeeper, when she brought in his breakfast, "a feeling of spring in the air."

He sat down to his bacon and coffee exceedingly well content. The post had brought him among other things a copy of a review published by a learned company of Benedictines. It contained an article on Cyprian's Letters, which promised to be deeply interesting. Father Staunton knew a great deal about Cyprian. He propped the review up against the coffee-pot, intending to feed body and mind together. But the charming inconsistency of the change from savage tempest to warm sunshine brought restlessness to Father Staunton. He tore the wrapper off a catalogue of second-hand books and set it up in front of the

review. The announcement of a really desirable edition of the works of St. Ambrose caught his eye. It was in four large octavo volumes. It was bound in calf. Its backs were gilt. The price was 10s. 6d. for each volume. He rose and wandered round his bookshelves. There was a gap beside *Fleury's Ecclesiastical History*. And Fleury, every volume of him, was bound in calf and had gilt backs. St. Ambrose would fill the gap well. Father Staunton knew something about St. Ambrose, and wished to know more. Ten and sixpence for each of four volumes would come to two guineas. He sat down again and ate thoughtfully.

"If it wasn't for the curate," he said, and sighed.

The Bishop of the diocese, a bustling man filled with a spirit new to Father Staunton, had some years previously announced that a curate would be desirable in the parish of Dhulough. Father Staunton had to pay the curate, and therefore he was not sure that he could afford two guineas for St. Ambrose. He sighed again, recollecting that neither his first curate nor his second had cared much about Cyprian and Ambrose, or shown any appreciation of books with fine bindings and gilt backs. Father Staunton had been educated in France and Rome, and he was an old man. The curates were young, and came from Maynooth. It was not to be denied that they knew a great deal, but somehow their knowledge did not seem to produce in them that delight in the delicate accessories of scholarship which made fine bindings and Benedictine learning dear to Father Staunton. The curates were, so the old priest fancied, a little contemptuous of his library. He tried hard not to be a little contemptuous of their lack of culture.

Father Staunton finished his breakfast and took, with

great enjoyment, two pinches of snuff. Then he opened the window, and with equal enjoyment inhaled deep breaths of the warm air. The housekeeper entered and began to clear away the breakfast things.

"There is," said Father Staunton, without remembering that he had made the same remark before, "a feeling of spring in the air."

The housekeeper, a kindly woman, did not contradict him.

"I think," said the priest after a short silence, "that I'll go out to see Rafferty to-day."

"Is it out across the sea, Father?"

"It is. I'll take Johnny Darcy's boat and I'll row myself out. You can put the remains of the loaf and a bit of cold meat in a basket, and I'll take them with me. Rafferty's a poor man, and he couldn't get in to mass yesterday through the storm, and it's likely he'll have little enough to eat to-day."

"And what about your own dinner?"

The housekeeper was a kindly woman, but her heart was soft towards Father Staunton, not towards Rafferty. She had meant to make the bit of cold meat into a stew and the bone of it into soup. She did not approve of feeding Rafferty.

"An idle spalpeen," so she described Rafferty to her friends, "that's here to-day and might be gone to-morrow, no, but ought to be gone to-morrow, for there's small signs of his going so long as the people feed him, and his reverence would take the bit out of his own mouth for him. Never a hand's turn he'll do for himself."

She was unjust to Rafferty. The man's occupation was gone—swept away from him without his fault by the new conditions of life. Once he had taught boys

and girls—taught them by cabin firesides, in barns, in the open air in fine weather. He had earned scanty fees, shelter and food, but he had been content. While he taught the children he preached Fenianism to the grown men. He carried copies of Kickham's paper about in his pockets, and circulated them in out-of-the-way places to the disquieting of country gentlemen and the angering of parish priests. In the end the Government itself took notice of Rafferty. He was seized by policemen, put in gaol, thundered at by a barrister, lectured by a judge, and finally set to purge his felony by hard labour in a convict prison. The law was merciful to Rafferty. He was a free man in five years, but he found that his occupation was gone. The country was dotted over with schools, and a new race of schoolmasters taught children to read English books, to recite Mrs. Hemans' poems, and to say the multiplication table. Rafferty in his day had spent little time or pains on the multiplication table, and none at all on English books or Casabianca. He had preferred an ancient Irish translation of Homer as an educational instrument. When he found a clever boy he taught him to appreciate the roll of the original hexameters, and even put him in the way of guessing pretty accurately at their meaning. But a new generation cared little for the old Irish culture, and less for the beauty of the classics. Rafferty's pupils had never been fit to keep the books of shopkeepers. And what good are great thoughts to boys and girls when the thing most desirable is gentility? Rafferty found no new pupils. After nearly starving for two years, he had found his way to Dhulough. He built himself a little shelter in a ruined cottage on Ilaun an Anama, the Island of Souls, which the English, making maps

of their Irish possessions, marked down as the Island of Soles. They scorned to understand the language in which the island was named, and the translation when they got it suggested to their minds fried fish and not the spiritual part of man. Here Rafferty settled down to live on the scraps the people gave him when he went round to their houses after mass on Sundays and holidays. Indeed he would have fared badly, for people are forgetful, and might have gone very hungry in bad weather if he had not found a friend in Father Staunton, and later on one not less staunch in Mr. Hegarty. But the likelihood of going hungry had very little terror in it for old Rafferty. Stored safe in a heap of dry bracken he had a pile of tattered Irish manuscripts—wonderful poems, stories, histories, the collection of a lifetime—preserved safe for him during his imprisonment by men who loved and respected him, though they never cared to read his books. With these were his printed books—an old Homer in folio, dragged for many years with immense toil from place to place as he wandered through the country seeking pupils; a Virgil and a Horace. These were for reading when daylight permitted him to read. In the winter nights he scarcely missed candle or lamp, for he had long passages ready for recitation, and a mind charged with more Irish poetry, legends, prayers, and charms than even his manuscripts contained.

“And what about your own dinner?” said Father Staunton’s housekeeper again.

“You can have it ready for me at five,” said the priest.

He offered no suggestion as to a substitute for the cold meat. It was the housekeeper’s business to see to such details. And she knew him too well to complain

or remonstrate. Only when she reached the kitchen and found old Biddy Cassidy, a sympathetic soul, taking an air at the fire, did she put her grievance into words.

"Me that has his reverence's shirt to wash, this being Monday, and two pairs of his socks with holes in them, and the dust lying as thick as you could dip your finger into it on all the full of an ass cart of books, for it's just on a day like to-day that you'd see the dust and it gathering maybe for weeks without your noticing on account of the weather that does be in it. It's no easy job I have of it, Biddy Cassidy, so I tell you, and now nothing will do himself, his reverence I mean, God bless him, but to take the bit of meat that's in the house and away with him out to old Rafferty. And I must put my shawl on me and be going down the road to Patsy Conway's and get something for him for the dinner, and the way things is these times it's likely as not he'll have nothing but some old end of a joint, or maybe a chop that'll be as tough to eat as the flap of a saddle, and his reverence with not more than a pair of decent teeth in his head, for nobody could chew with that contraption they put into his mouth last time he was up in Dublin with the dentist."

"Musha, God help you for an afflicted woman," said Biddy Cassidy. "It's a queer world, so it is; and it's often your mother that's gone, God rest her soul, said that same to me when I did be going in and out doing turns for her."

Father Staunton, with his basket on his arm, started on his walk towards the lake. On his way he went through the village and then on past the rectory gate. He saw Mr. Hegarty in front of him with fishing-tackle in his hand and a basket slung across his shoulders.

Father Staunton was a man who liked companionship. He quickened his pace and overtook Mr. Hegarty.

"Good morning to you, Mr. Hegarty. You're going out fishing, I see."

The parson turned. There was a smile on his face at the sound of the priest's voice. Many people smiled when Father Staunton spoke to them, not because he said specially amusing things or because there was anything comic in his way of speaking. They smiled in sheer pleasure at the sympathetic kindness that was in the man's voice.

"You can't object to that," said Mr. Hegarty. "It was the occupation of the apostles."

"Of St. Peter," said Father Staunton. "But you wouldn't want to set up St. Peter for an example. It's St. Paul you hold by. Come now, can you quote me a text out of any of the epistles that would lead you to think St. Paul ever hooked a fish in his life?"

"You have me there. But I'll split the difference with you. We'll both abide by St. John, whatever we may say about the other two. And you can't deny that he was a fisherman."

"St. John had more sense than to go fishing with an ebbing tide and with no bait on his hook. You'll not get a coal fish, if that's what you're after, before five o'clock in the afternoon, and well you know it. Unless, maybe, you'll be making yourself out the equal of the blessed apostles and expecting a miracle."

"There's no deceiving you at all, Father Staunton. It's true enough that I'm going down to take the loan of Johnny Darcy's boat. But indeed I'm not much set on fishing. I was thinking of rowing over and having a chat with old Rafferty."

"Upon my honour, Mr. Hegarty, I'll have to de-

nounce you off the altar if you go on pursuing my parishioners like that. I believe you're bent on bribing the man to change his religion. There's more going out in that basket of yours than is likely to come home in it, however you fish. The strap looks mighty tight on your shoulder to be supporting an empty creel."

Mr. Hegarty blushed. He had in fact half a loaf of soda bread, three eggs, and a large bottle of milk in the basket.

"But I'll acquit you of any evil designs," went on the priest; "more especially as neither priest nor parson will ever make much hand of converting Rafferty to any kind of Christianity. He comes to mass, and I'll give him the last rites when his time comes, if I'm spared so long. But the man's an old Fenian, and those Fenians were a stiff generation, with no great love for the clergy. Besides, he's a pagan in his heart. He believes in his fairies and his charms a lot more firmly than he does in the saints or the sacraments, and he has them all mixed up with the old gods of the classical times."

Mr. Hegarty sighed. He was a Protestant, and Protestantism has little tolerance for the primitive superstitions of mankind. It was not Protestantism or the Protestant spirit which drew pagan Europe into the gospel net. It was a faith less narrowly virile, which could afford to smile when men went on praying by their holy wells, which baptized heathen festivals, even, they say, heathen heroes, with new names, so that the western world became Catholic almost without knowing it.

"Where are you going yourself?" asked Mr. Hegarty.

"It's very odd now, but I was going just the same way as you were. Only, because I'm not blessed with

a wife, I didn't have to make a hypocrite of myself by taking a fishing-line with me. I've a trifle in this basket myself for old Rafferty. What would you say, now, if we went together? You're a younger man than I am, and I wouldn't be sorry to have your help with the oars. There'll be a bit of a swell after the storm yesterday."

"I'll row you out with pleasure."

"Are you sure, now, that you won't be ashamed to be seen in the boat with a Papist and a priest? What will your parishioners say of you?"

The two clergymen arrived at the little bay in which Johnny Darcy kept his boat. Father Staunton bailed her out with an old tin canister, while Mr. Hegarty fetched the oars from behind the big rock where they were hidden. Then they launched her and got on board. Father Staunton settled himself in the stern with the two baskets at his feet. Mr. Hegarty, stripped of his coat and waistcoat, took the oars. Outside the shelter of the little bay the boat swung slowly over the great smooth waves which, passing under her, rolled sullenly towards the shore, and broke in crashes against the rocks and hard sand. Father Staunton, sitting in the stern, could see the spray rising in brilliant clouds over the Island of Souls, and the white fringe of surf along even the nearer sheltered shore. There was no wind, and the surface of the water round about the boat lay unbroken in the sunshine, save where Mr. Hegarty dipped his oars; or a puffin, frightened by their approach, dived suddenly; or a cormorant, flying low, splashed with his wing tips. So smooth were the backs of the great rollers and the hollows between them that the boat left a widening track of ripples behind her, as she advanced slowly, her blunt bows forcing

a way for her. For a while the two men sat silent. Then, half a mile from the shore, Mr. Hegarty stopped rowing.

"Tired already?" asked Father Staunton. "Give me a turn. She's a heavy old tub, and she leaks like a sieve."

"No. I'm not tired. But I want to speak to you. I'd like to ask your advice. You're an older man than I am, and you know more of the world. At least I suppose you must know more. You can't well know less."

He turned round, took his coat from the seat behind him, and drew an envelope from the pocket of it.

"I found this envelope and the parchment inside it," he said, "in an old iron chest where my parish registers are kept."

He handed it to Father Staunton.

"Am I to read it?" said the priest.

"Yes. But wait a moment. Did you ever hear the story of old Stephen Butler and the oath he took before the altar the year of the Union?"

"I did, of course. There's not a man in the county but knows that story."

"Did you know that he laid it on his son and his grandson and every generation of his descendants never to rest content with the English rule of this country?"

"I heard that too," said the priest.

"Well, that's a copy of the oath in your hand. You may read it. You'll see it's signed by old Stephen Butler and witnessed by a predecessor of mine, a man called Moneypenny."

The priest took the paper from the envelope and read it slowly.

"It's an interesting document," he said. "But what has it got to do with you or me?"

"Ah! that's just what I want your advice about. Ought I to hand it over to the young man—this Stephen Butler who's come to live among us now—or ought I to lock it up again and keep it to myself? You'll think me a fool, no doubt, but I came out with it in my pocket to-day to think the matter over by myself out on the sea. It seemed to me I might come to some sort of conclusion about what was right to do under the open sky with the water round me."

"I do not think you a fool for that," said the priest. "Maybe the Spirit of God is nearer us here than anywhere else. And it was His Spirit you were looking to to guide you, I suppose? But I don't see the difficulty. Of course, you'll show him the paper. Why not?"

"Why not? Don't you see that if this Stephen Butler accepts the—the trust—I mean if he comes to believe that it's his duty to try to work for the freedom of Ireland from the English rule, he'll have a life of toil and trouble and disappointment before him, and he can only fail in the end."

"Well," said the priest, "in the first place, he'll hear the story whether you give him the paper or not. You can't help that. And in the next place, are you sure that he'll fail in the end? I'm no politician, thank God, but I'm an Irishman, and I don't believe my country is going to disappear altogether and be just an English county. Some day she'll be a nation again and have a glory of her own among the peoples of the world. Do you believe that?"

"I'm not sure that I do. We're going under, we Irish. Every year there are fewer of us. Every year we get weaker, more apathetic, more hopeless. I don't

see what we are to look forward to but just the going on of the decay until the end."

"And if what you say is true—and God forbid that it should be—wouldn't it still be better for this young man to spend his life in a good cause, to be trying to do something even if he fails in the end? Wouldn't it be better for him than just to fold his hands and be content to watch things go to ruin, like the rest of us? But what's the good of our talking? His life is in his own hands. Neither you nor I can make him act if he's a coward, nor keep him from doing his best if he's the right sort of man. And I hope he is. He comes of a good stock. There was always fine stuff in the Butlers. Give him the paper, Mr. Hegarty, as soon as ever you get the chance. What right have you to keep it back from him?"

Hegarty bent over his oars again and rowed in silence till the boat grounded on the sand in the one sheltered bay of the island, the landing-place below old Rafferty's hermitage.

CHAPTER VII

LORD DAINTREE had reached an age which justified his retiring from any active part in the management of the empire's diplomacy; but he had not ceased to be intellectually alive. The years he spent in trying to understand the intentions and estimate the characters of monarchs and statesmen left him still intensely interested in human nature. He gave up of his own accord the opportunities which he enjoyed of plumbing the minds of the great of the earth. He found himself, somewhat to his own surprise, curious to investigate the intellect and character of the men with whom he came in contact in Connacht. It did not matter much to the world in general what Mr. Manders and Dean Ponsonby thought, or on what principles they acted. No great issues depended on forming a right estimate of such men, but the forming of the estimate was just as interesting in itself as if Mr. Manders had been a Prime Minister and the Dean a Cardinal. Lord Daintree, relieved of the responsibilities of his old position, played the game of understanding the men who surrounded him with zest and unabated curiosity.

The arrival of Stephen Butler at Dhulough gave him pleasure. There were few things which Lord Daintree did not hear sooner or later, and few men of any position of whose record and reputation he did not

know something. Rumours about Stephen Butler's university career had reached him, and he anticipated a good deal of pleasure in getting to understand the mental attitude of a young man, a gentleman and a landlord, who championed, or allowed it to be supposed that he championed, the cause of the Fenians.

On Monday afternoon, taking advantage of the brilliant sunshine which followed the storm, he drove over to Dhulough. His first impression of Stephen Butler was that the young man was a gentleman. Lord Daintree was favourably disposed towards him from the outset. Here was a man belonging plainly to a certain class, one on whom an English public school and university had set their mark, who would speak as Lord Daintree's friends spoke, behave as they behaved, who would touch the affairs of life with clean hands.

"You and I," said the old gentleman, "ought to be friends. We're neighbours, and our families have been neighbours for a couple of hundred years. Of course there was a quarrel, but that was seventy years ago or more. My father and your grandfather—but you know the story."

"No. I know very little of my family history. You must tell it me. But you must have a biscuit and a glass of wine after your drive. I'll ring. My servants are rather a scratch lot, but I brought a man over with me from London who can get us what we want. Now for my grandfather."

"Well, you know, my peerage is one of the admirable results of the Union of England and Ireland. You know the story of the Union?"

"I've read Jonah Barrington."

"Ah! I haven't. But no doubt it's all there. My father was one of the much-abused people who sold his

country. As a matter of fact, it was a very good job he did, as things have turned out. He got a peerage, and the country was saved from making itself publicly ridiculous by trying to set up as an independent state. That's what it would have come to in the end, you know. But your grandfather was what they call a patriot. Of course the feeling wasn't out of date in those days. Lots of quite intelligent men were patriots. He wouldn't have a peerage or a cheque or a bishopric for his nephew by marriage or anything else. He quarrelled with my father. I don't know exactly which of them was the aggressor in the first instance, but in the end they shot at each other with pistols—a really insane proceeding. Very luckily neither of them got killed. At least, it was very lucky for me, because I wasn't born at the time, and if my father had been killed I might have been—but there's no use speculating about contingencies, is there?"

Stephen Butler smiled. "Not a bit," he said. "Ah, here's my man. They told me that this sherry was pretty good. I'm not much of a judge myself."

"Few men are," said Lord Daintree, "though most men insist on smacking their lips when they've seen the seal on the bottle. The fact is that if a man wants to enjoy his wine he ought never to touch spirits. Keep clear of brandy, and you may develop a palate in time. It's an art, tasting wine, just like writing poetry or painting pictures. But I must get on with the story. I rather think old Stephen Butler must have let my father down easy—spared his life, or something of that sort. Otherwise I can't account for the way I was brought up to hate the very name of Butler. As a boy I used to think the Butlers of Dhulough were first cousins to Old Nick. I never spoke to your father in my life.

Of course I left Ireland when I was very young, and have hardly been in the country since. It's a wretched country for a young man, unless he's the sort of barbarian who lives for the sake of shooting and fishing. I suppose you are only here on a flying visit?"

He paused, and watched Stephen's face. Would there be a flare of patriotic repudiation of this belittlement of Ireland? or would the young man yield deference to his visitor's reputation, smother his own feelings, and respond with another sneer at Ireland? In either case Lord Daintree would be amused, and would be a step nearer to understanding Stephen Butler. The answer he actually got puzzled him a little. It was spoken quite quietly and simply, as if it were a mere commonplace.

"I mean to stay in Ireland. I want to know my people and see what can be done for them and the property."

"Ah, the people! You can't do anything for them, you know. These Irish properties pay pretty well if they're properly managed. But you can't take up your property as a hobby the way some men do in England. That's quite impossible here. Your Irishman would put his pigs into the model cottage if you built him one, and take his wife and family back to the filthy hovel you left for the pigs. He prefers a hovel. That's his nature. And it's a good job for us he does. Nobody expects us to spend any money on our estates or try stupid experiments with crops or cattle."

The sherry was drunk, several glasses of it by Lord Daintree, and the conversation drifted on. There was talk about politics, about Whigs and Tories, and about the disestablishment of the Church.

"The parsons grumble a lot," said Lord Daintree,

"but my own impression is that they have got out of it pretty well. We're the people that will have to pay up. I reckon that I can't get off under a hundred a year. My property seems to be scattered about through half the parishes in the county, and they all expect their pound of flesh from me. Now, you're all right. You're in a ring fence, and only one parson has any sort of claim on you."

"So far as I can see, he might as well be my private chaplain. I went to church yesterday, and there were only two people there besides myself."

"Is it as bad as that? All the rest Papists? Well, you're all the better off. My father planted a lot of Protestants from the north down on his property early in the century. Most of their descendants are Papists now—married the women of the land and went after strange gods, as their ancestors would have said. But the confounded Protestant independence is in their blood. They are a stiff-necked, uncompromising lot—always making trouble about their rents. Now, the real Papist is easy to deal with. I'm told, by the way, that the priest in your village is a decent sort of old man. He's a gentleman, too, one of the Stauntons from down Limerick way—a good old family. You ought to know him. He'd be a great deal pleasanter man to have to dinner than your parson, from all I hear of him."

"I rather liked what I saw of the parson in church yesterday. I shouldn't say he was a gentleman, judging by his brogue and his appearance. But he seemed to be in earnest."

"Now I wonder what you mean by that? Manders says he's methodistical. I suppose that means that he wants to save your soul for you, an extremely boring

thing, of course, but not otherwise objectionable. Is that what you mean by his being in earnest? Or do you think he has principles, the sort of fixed beliefs some men act on without regard to consequences? A man of that kind is actually dangerous. I should advise you to get rid of him as soon as you can."

Stephen Butler had not the least dread of people who act on principle. He had not Lord Daintree's knowledge of the world, nor a training in the diplomatic service. He was young, and therefore foolish. He supposed that many men acted on principle in the sort of way his Quaker friends did. He suspected that Lord Daintree did not mean half he said, but he was not unwilling to prolong a conversation. The old gentleman's cynicism interested him. It was something new.

"Can you get rid of a parson?" he asked. "I thought they enjoyed a kind of freehold."

"Oh, you can't give them notice to leave like a servant. But you can secure some sort of promotion for a man you don't like. Most of them will jump at a bigger salary, and the ones that won't, like what they call a wider sphere of influence. But whatever you do about the parson, don't forget to cultivate Father Staunton. He's a gentleman and a pleasant fellow, I'm told. But apart from that, it's a very good thing to be on friendly terms with the priest. The priests are the coming power in Ireland. Our day is pretty well over. My impression is that the Irish landlords have gone too far and too fast. There's trouble coming, and as a class we have no friends in the country. We'll collapse in the near future and go under. I dare say the present state of things may last out my time; but you'll see something very like a revolution if you live to

be my age. You ought—all of you to whom the future matters—ought to seize your opportunity and make friends with the priests. That's your best chance."

"I understand," said Stephen, "that some of our gentry are going into this new movement for Home Rule or Home Government, or whatever they call it."

"It's too late for that. It's possible that in your father's time the Irish gentry might have headed a national movement. The sense of nationality is extraordinarily strong among the Irish. They are like the Hungarians and the Poles in that respect. If the gentry of the last generation had played to the gallery, the Irish gallery, they might have taken a new lease of their privileges and property, a lease that would have run for a century. But they can't do it now. They've bullied the people and plundered them far too long. I know what I'm talking about because I've done it myself. That is to say, I paid some one else to do the bullying, because that sort of thing bores me; but I've taken the plunder. There's a new spirit in the country now—a growing feeling of class hatred, and a very natural desire for security and a fair chance of living. This will be stronger for many a day to come than the feeling for nationality. These amiable Home Rule gentlemen are, no doubt, perfectly sincere in what they call their patriotism, but they are utterly mistaken about the times they live in. The next great popular agitation will be against their class and not against England. And Englishmen, though mostly thick-headed, have a very fine political instinct. They will buy off the people by sacrificing the landlords. It's the line of least resistance for them, and they'll take it."

"But it is very interesting to see the sense of nationality reviving among our gentry. You know my people were always nationalists in a way. My father, I believe, had a strong feeling in favour of the Young Ireland people, and my grandfather——"

"He voted against the Union. And there was a queer story that used to go the rounds about an oath he swore—something about living and dying a rebel."

"I never heard of that. What was it?"

"I don't know the rights of it. But I am sure any of the old people would give you a garbled version of it. There may be papers; I really don't know. Of course, if it amuses you, you can go into this new movement yourself. They'd be very glad to get you, I dare say. But it will be no use. The ground is crumbling under our feet, and we won't save ourselves by building a castle on it."

"How do you know so much about Ireland when you have never lived here?"

"Well, I suppose I know partly because I've never lived here. There's such a thing as getting too near what you want to see. It's better to stand a bit away. You don't see the small details, but you get a grip of the whole. Then of course I've been all my life watching men of different nations playing the game of politics. It's a nice game, and the pieces on the board have fine names—loyalty, liberty, patriotism, and so on. But every now and then a man comes along who's hungry, and he upsets all the pretty pieces and fine plans. Greater than all things is the belly of man. We talk grand words when we're full, but we simply clamour when we are empty and the fine words won't satisfy us. It is just beginning to occur to the people of this country, to the serfs out there in the muddy cabins, that

they might get a full meal of bread and porter instead of a half-meal of buttermilk and potatoes. They will clamour, and you won't be able to quiet them by waving a green flag. You'll have to give up buying that excellent brown sherry."

"But I've not robbed my tenants. I don't believe my father did, and I'm sure my trustees didn't."

"More fools they. You'll suffer just the same. The individual is not considered on these occasions. You and your people might just as well have made the most of your opportunities."

Lord Daintree talked on. The inexperienced investigator of human character thinks to gain information by asking questions and making the victim of his curiosity talk. Lord Daintree believed in talking himself and letting the other man listen. Besides, he enjoyed talking. He particularly enjoyed it when he had an intelligent listener, and Stephen Butler was evidently highly intelligent; much more so than either Mr. Manders or Dean Ponsonby. To Mr. Manders life was a very simple business, just a matter of obtaining as many good things as possible and sacrificing as few as possible without offending a curiously arbitrary deity called "the honour of a gentleman." This was the only idol which Mr. Manders worshipped. Stephen Butler had many others in his temple. Lord Daintree saw them, as time after time during his talk he succeeded in lifting a corner of the veil and peeping in. There they were, whole rows of them—faith, truth, liberty, patriotism, and the rest, with their names in gold letters on their pedestals and incense ready to burn before them. There was great pleasure for an iconoclast to be found in smearing their calm faces and beautiful limbs with grotesque colours. It was not safe to touch Mr.

Manders' divinity. For Mr. Manders got angry and glared at a hint that the honour of a gentleman might be made to look ridiculous. It was highly delightful to watch Stephen Butler, guardian-priest of a whole Pantheon, shudder at blasphemy. Therefore Lord Daintree blasphemed, until it struck him suddenly that Stephen Butler was not shuddering. He talked on, considering this curious fact. For Stephen Butler ought to have shuddered. Lord Daintree was blasphemous enough. Why was there no shuddering?

Lord Daintree was a clever man, clever enough to have discovered that most worship of divinities is no more than a becoming pose adopted by the worshipper. But he was also a wise man, wise with the wisdom that comes of immense experience, and he knew that here and there in the world are men whose adoration of liberty, patriotism, and such ideas is not a pose, but a reality. These men do not get angry when you insult their gods. They do not shudder at blasphemies. They know that the objects of their worship are great, lofty, serene—too serene to be affected by the laughter of little men. They listen to the cynical epigrams of the clever, and without resentment or contempt think that the scoffers are posing. Believing themselves with an intensity of faith which comes near to being actual knowledge, they give every one else credit for believing too. It is almost always possible to outwit these simple men, to overreach them, to lead them into foolish action. Circumstances occasionally overwhelm them and bring their life-work down in crumbling fragments. It is never possible to shake their faith or drive them into angry defence of their creed.

Before his visit was over Lord Daintree came to believe that he had discovered such a man in Stephen

Butler. He became exceedingly interested, more interested than ever, in the young man.

"It will be," he said, "most fascinating to watch him. Ireland to-day gives him what looks like an opportunity. Of course he'll join these Tory-Nationalist gentlemen, and get himself into a perfectly impossible position. But Ireland to-morrow—what will that Ireland make of him?"

CHAPTER VIII

NO reasonable man, that is to say no Englishman, can understand why the Irish are discontented with the position of their country. Has not Ireland got the same laws as England? Does not an Irishman pay the same taxes as an Englishman? Are not the Union Jacks which decorate Irish custom-houses on the King's birthday quite as voluminous as those which flutter in England? Do not the Irish share with their neighbour Saxons the inestimable privilege of taunting the sun because, however the earth may twist and turn, there is always some little strip of the British Empire gaping for rays of light and heat? What more can Irishmen want?

And yet the Irish are not content. This is a very curious fact. It is indeed quite unaccountable to the reasonable, that is to say the English, mind. For it is not as if just one section of the Irish people was discontented. No Irishman is really satisfied with the condition of his country. It has from time to time been supposed that the Protestant democracy of the north is fanatically attached to the Union with England. But it is not. The Orangeman is desperately frightened of the Pope, and believes that, but for the English connection, his thumbs would be in screws and his body on a rack. But he has no real love for England or the English. Remove the boggy priest from before his eyes, and the rags of his political Unionism

will drop off from him. He will stand before the world just such a man as his ancestor was in 1778 or 1798, a volunteer or a United Irishman, naked and unashamed. He will be quite prepared to kick or otherwise contemptuously propel into the Boyne anything at all, from a King's crown to an Act of Parliament. It is sometimes thought that the Irish gentry are as sincerely loyal to England as the gentlemen of Leicestershire or Kent. But they are not. The discipline of the rifle corps of English public schools, the training in cricket and football afforded by the universities, even the culture imparted at Sandhurst, only serve as a veneer to hide the rough grain of the Irish wood underneath. Now and then something happens—quite a dull and apparently uninteresting thing perhaps—and the Irish gentleman begins to hum a tune suspiciously like the Shan Van Vocht. Quite recently a Royal Commission published a Blue Book in which it appeared that Ireland was overtaxed. To the amazement of everybody, the Irish gentry rose up in their various counties and proclaimed the startling fact that they were Irishmen. Fortunately there were able statesmen at hand who knew how to quiet them, but for a few weeks it really looked as if a new Royal Commission would have to be appointed to prove that the first one had been tampering with the truth. And the Irish gentry may do the same thing again any day. Nobody can feel sure of them. There was an elephant once in a Zoological Gardens which used to take coppers in the gentlest way from the hands of little children and carry them to his keeper. He was the tamest elephant ever seen. But one day, quite suddenly, he killed his keeper. Wise people said that he must have had the toothache and been cross, but it is far more likely that

some trifle made him realise that he was a noble sort of beast by nature, and that there was a want of dignity in becoming an animated penny-in-the-slot machine for the amusement of nursemaids and their charges. Every now and then some such dim apprehension of his own proper part in life smites the Irish gentleman. He waves his trunk ferociously, and probably some day he'll give the keeper a nasty blow on the head, carry no more pennies to his shops, and do no more marching in remote corners of an empire, which is not his, with heavy cannons on his back.

Thus in the year 1870 a number of Irish gentlemen were extremely angry at the disestablishment of their Church. They said that the English had made a treaty with them in 1800, and that one of the articles of the treaty was that the Church should not be disestablished. Of course, this was a ridiculous way of talking. Treaties are not things which anybody dreams of keeping unless the other party to the treaty has a great many guns. And the Irish gentry had given up keeping guns for nearly a hundred years. Still, they did talk of broken treaties, and formed themselves into what they called a Home Government Association. They even appealed to the people of the country, the very people whom they had been taught to consider as natural enemies. And the people, who for the most part had forgotten about the treaty, and certainly cared nothing at all about the Church, rallied round these gentry and sent a number of them, as many as fifty, to the English Parliament. In those days gentry and people alike believed that something might be done by means of speechmaking at Westminster.

Young Stephen Butler spent a good deal of his time alone at Dhulough. He was hospitable in the manner

of dinners, but the number of neighbours who could be asked to dinner was very small and their counter invitations were necessarily few. There remained many evenings which had to be spent alone in the library at Dhulough House. Stephen found himself thinking very often of the story of his grandfather's oath. He never went into the little church without picturing to himself the scene of the swearing. The great bare, low-ceilinged dining-room of his home; the dark wainscoted library with its huge open hearth; the noise of the sea outside; the bleak landscape; the sombre, slate-sheathed walls of his house, all suggested to him the fierce old man who had hated so unwaveringly. It seemed as if something of old Stephen Butler's spirit dwelt in the place.

Reading the newspapers, Stephen came to feel strongly attracted to the vehement Irish gentlemen who were pleading their country's cause in Parliament. He studied their speeches, and felt that there was in them neither baseness nor selfishness. Their methods of work appealed to him. There was none of the blatant bombast of the demagogue, none of the crafty scheming of the ambitious politician. They spoke openly the things that were in their minds, proclaimed the end they had in view and the means by which they hoped to attain it. There was a warmth in their words, a flow of genuinely patriotic feeling, a transparent purity of motive. When they reached the Houses of Parliament at Westminster, they behaved there as gentlemen should in an assembly of gentlemen. They stated their case boldly; appealed to reason and to justice; claimed that right should be done because it was right; were perfectly confident that they would prevail. All this attracted Stephen Butler.

One evening he opened his heart to Mr. Manders. He had accepted the agent's invitation to dinner, and Dean Ponsonby and Lord Daintree having both been obliged to decline, found himself *tête-à-tête* with his host. Questions of game preservation and the wickedness of tenants who shot foxes exhausted themselves, and when the punch was brewed Stephen Butler began to express his admiration for Isaac Butt and his followers.

"D—d fools," was Mr. Manders' brief comment.

"Why fools?"

"Well, in the first place, because nobody minds their talk. You don't suppose the English will be silly enough to give them what they want? Why on earth should they? I'm not an Englishman, thank God, but if I was I'd see Ireland under the sea before I lifted my heel off it. These fellows are simply playing the Fenian game in another way. Give them an inch and they'll take an ell. No sane Englishman would dream of giving them Home Rule."

"But if the thing is right?"

"Right be d—d! Besides, it isn't right. Home Rule would simply mean handing the country over to a pack of priests and blackguards. No gentleman could live in it. I know the Irish, and, if you'll excuse my saying so, you don't. The only security we have for our lives and properties is the power of England. Right! How can it be right for gentlemen and Protestants to go handing their own class over to the tender mercies of Papist rebels? Right! The thing's wrong on the face of it."

Stephen was neither frightened nor irritated by this outburst. He reasoned with his host. He set before him the disadvantages under which Ireland suffered on

account of her connection with England. He argued that no single class ought to stand for its own advantage to the detriment of the nation as a whole. He suggested that perhaps the gentry and the Protestants would suffer less than Mr. Manders supposed in an independent Ireland. Mr. Manders seemed entirely unimpressed. He reiterated at intervals a few phrases of invective—"Fenian murderers," "Damned rascals," "The scum of the country." But it was not only the Irish Nationalists whom Mr. Manders despised. He had an equal contempt and dislike for the English. "I never sit in the room with an Englishman," he said, "without wanting to throw a boot at his infernal head."

Stephen drove home with an uneasy feeling that he'd made a fool of himself by talking to his agent, and that Mr. Manders was hopelessly hostile to the very idea of Irish nationality. In this he was wrong. His arguments had fallen upon barren soil, but his earnestness and simple straightforwardness had left an impression on Mr. Manders.

A few days afterwards Lord Daintree called at the agent's office. His tenants were clamouring for a reduction of rent. He did not intend to grant it.

"I can't do it, Manders. I'm sorry for the poor devils, but I can't do it. I want every penny of my income. My son can't manage to live on his allowance. He makes large calls on me, and I must have money."

It was at this time a matter of common gossip that Captain the Honourable Eustace De Lancy had been made to pay heavy damages to a lady who danced in a London music-hall. The young man had been indiscreet enough to write compromising letters to the fascinating damsel, and she had produced them in court to the immense delight of a judge, several lawyers, and

a jury. It was likely that Captain De Lancy's ordinary expenses were heavy enough. The price of an incidental flirtation of this kind was a serious addition to them.

"I have a letter from Snell," said Manders; "wanting his rents screwed up a bit. He hints at evicting on a large scale and consolidating farms for grazing. It's been a bad year, too."

"I'm sorry," said Lord Daintree; "but what am I to do? A man must live."

"Of course he must; and after all the land is yours, not theirs."

A smile fluttered over Lord Daintree's lips. It broadened. He laughed. Mr. Manders looked at him in surprise.

"You wonder why I laugh. Well, just as I said to you 'a man must live,' it occurred to me to think how Stephen Butler would have answered if I'd made the same remark to him. How do you think he'd have taken it?"

"I don't know." Mr. Manders was not very quick-witted; and he felt a curious dislike to making fun of Stephen Butler.

"Well, I'll tell you. He'd have said: 'A man must live! But supposing two men feel the necessity equally strongly? Supposing the poor devil of a tenant feels that he must live too?' Eh, Manders?"

"Stephen Butler's got queer notions. But he's a fine fellow; I like him."

"But what do you think of his politics?"

"His politics are rotten. But I'm not sure that they are any rottener than my politics or yours. If we are to be robbed—and it looks as if that's what's coming—we may as well be robbed decently by our own people

here in Ireland, where we can make some sort of fight for ourselves, as by a pack of beastly English shopkeepers—Methodists, most of them; people we can't get at."

It seemed that Stephen Butler's arguments had after all produced some effect upon Mr. Manders. A man is not an Irish patriot because he dislikes nonconformist English grocers. Still, he has advanced from the position of the believer in that great heart of the English people which is supposed to beat sympathetically for poor Cinderella—Ireland, of the tatters and the bogs.

Besides Lord Daintree and Mr. Manders there was no one with whom Stephen could make friends, except Mr. Hegarty, Dean Ponsonby, and Father Staunton. Mr. Hegarty attracted him from the first; but there were great difficulties in the way of establishing an intimacy. The clergyman was extremely shy. A visit to the rectory resulted in an interview with Mrs. Hegarty instead of her husband. The lady, gaily bedecked in honour of Stephen's coming, talked loud to him of fashionable people whom neither of them knew, retailing month-old gossip gathered from ladies' papers. While she talked she rolled her eyes. They were very fine eyes, bright blue, and like those of King Solomon's lady friend, liquid as the fishpools of Heshbon. Mr. Manders found delight in their revolutions; but for Stephen Butler they were expressionless as those of the fish which inhabited the oriental monarch's ponds. Even when Mr. Hegarty was present during one of the visits, it was impossible to get quiet speech with him on account of the extreme attractiveness of his wife. When Stephen invited them to dinner at Dhulough House things were no better. Mrs. Hegarty, bare-

armed and bare-chested as if for a great ball, talked more extensively than ever; and when at last she swept from the room it was impossible to sit long with her husband who would drink no wine. Once Stephen brought over Dean Ponsonby to meet the Hegartys at dinner. But the experiment was not a success. The older clergyman evidently regarded Mrs. Hegarty as an extremely vulgar woman; and after dinner, though he drank his wine satisfactorily, ignored Mr. Hegarty entirely, and bored his host with detailed accounts of the financial position of the disestablished church.

Father Staunton proved to be much more approachable and much more agreeable to Stephen than the clergy of his own church. The old priest dined frequently at Dhulough House. He told delightfully humorous and kindly stories about the peasantry. He had a store of local antiquarian knowledge. He delighted in discovering and discussing the old pamphlets and papers which lay on the shelves of the library. He cast light on the obscure intrigues and tangled policies which make the study of the history of Ireland during the first half of the nineteenth century difficult.

He took Stephen out to see Rafferty on his island. The old man was reserved and silent at first. He distrusted Stephen, fearing the patronage, perhaps the charity of a landlord and a gentleman. But Father Staunton's kindly flow of talk thawed Rafferty after a while. Irish manuscripts were produced and exhibited. The old Homer was put into Stephen's hands. The priest, with his foreign learning and his appreciation of the beauty and pathos of the old Fenian schoolmaster's culture, was just such a guide and companion as a man might choose who wanted to understand the strange, lost Ireland which Rafferty represented.

Stephen's modesty and simplicity of manner commended him to Rafferty.

"There's one thing more," he said, "that maybe I might show you."

He stood on a wooden stool and unhooked from the nails on which it hung an old rifle.

"Now," said Father Staunton, "put that back. I see you have the barrel of it polished as bright as the spoons Mr. Butler stirs his tea with. Now what's the good of it? Isn't it time for an old man like you to be giving up such thoughts? It's not fighting you ought to be thinking of at your time of life. Put it back."

"It's not you I'm wanting to show it to, Father. Don't I know you don't care for the likes of it? The clergy was always against us and you as much as another. But Mr. Butler might like the feel of the gun in his hand. They say his grandfather was a man who might have had a gun of the sort himself."

"Come along, come along, Mr. Butler," said Father Staunton. "I have a reputation to lose if you haven't. And besides, the tide's ebbing, and we won't get ashore to-night if we let the boat get high and dry on the beach."

Stephen rowed home in silence. He was moved by the flash of light cast suddenly on Rafferty's character. The old man who loved the Gaelic poetry so well, who read and recited Greek hexameters, cherished his ancient rifle more carefully even than his books. It was, perhaps, his dearest possession. Once he had hoped to take his place with it in the fighting line of Ireland's militia, her modern Fianna. Was the hope dead in him yet? There was something in Stephen which responded sympathetically to the old Fenian's spirit. Father

Staunton, guessing perhaps at what was passing through his friend's mind, spoke to him while they walked from the boat towards Dhulough House.

"Let Ireland alone, Mr. Butler. It's peace and quietness that we want. Aren't the people well enough wherever they have a good landlord like yourself? No good comes of their agitating and fighting. I know the way that work ends. Half a dozen poor fellows, that might have been contented with their wives and children, get hanged, and the men that led them into trouble slip across to America and take the people's money with them."

"Come in with me and stay for dinner," said Stephen.

"I can't to-night. I'd like to, but I can't. I'm expecting my new curate. He's at the Presbytery by this time, and he'd think it queer if I didn't go home to welcome him."

"Well," said Stephen, "I'll call on your curate to-morrow, and you shall both dine with me the next night. What's his name?"

"Father O'Sullivan."

But Father O'Sullivan refused not only the first, but all subsequent invitations from Stephen Butler. He remained aloof. Stephen meeting him in the village street, could get no more than the stiffest recognition in return for greetings meant to be friendly. Yet the young priest was an interesting man to look at. He had clear grey eyes and a face with a suggestion of strength in it. The set of his head on his shoulders and his confident walk gave an impression of force and vigour which was singularly attractive. Stephen would have liked very well to be friends with him. But the priest's whole manner when they met was eloquent of a settled watchful hostility. It was in vain that Stephen

made one effort after another to get, as it were, inside his guard. Once, seeing him standing at the door of the chapel, Stephen addressed him—

“I’ve been thinking, Father O’Sullivan, that you must often feel the want of books in a quiet place like this. I shall be very pleased if you make any use you like of my library. It will be always at your disposal, and if I am not at home when you call, my man will show you where the books are.”

Father O’Sullivan thanked him, but not very graciously. Stephen was vexed and hurt. He had meant to be kind, and it seemed to him that he had been rudely repulsed. In fact, Father O’Sullivan had not meant to be rude. He was a proud man, intensely suspicious of anything like patronage or condescension. He had behind him a family history of a kind not uncommon in Ireland in those days. He had been brought up to regard the Protestant gentry of Ireland as an alien race, a foreign garrison. He thought of them, believing that the experience of his father and grandfather entirely justified him, as oppressors and despoilers of the people. He was himself of the people, the son of a tenant farmer, and he was proud to consider himself one of a down-trodden race. He, like Stephen Butler, cherished a hope, was prepared to labour for an end. Stephen, looking into the future, saw there the political freedom of Ireland—the restoration of a national life, the duties and the glory of which would be shared by all classes and by people of every creed. Father O’Sullivan, fixing his gaze on nearer things, saw the emancipation of one class, the downfall of another, and the honour of a Church long despised. For Stephen, with a larger vision, this priest and every Irishman was a potential friend. To Father O’Sullivan,

Stephen was a landlord and a Protestant, therefore necessarily an enemy.

For a time the settled coldness of the young priest troubled Stephen. After a while he came to forget it. Life began to open wide before him. His mind was occupied with larger matters than the conduct of the people of Dhulough and the neighbourhood. He got into touch with the men who were then the exponents of Ireland's political aspirations, and came to take part in the work of the party which represented Irish patriotism in Parliament.

For Stephen it was particularly easy to enter public life. He bore a name honourable in Irish history. He was prepared to devote himself to the work of the party which attracted him. It was not long before a constituency was found to elect him, and he was looked upon as a hopeful recruit by the gentlemen who then pleaded the cause of Ireland at Westminster.

In England and elsewhere men have got to be more or less careful in choosing their representatives, because the representatives, once chosen, may possibly, in spite of the existence of the House of Lords, do something—pass a Bill or impose a tax—which will affect the life of the elector pleasantly or unpleasantly. Irish representatives, through no fault of their own, are debarred from making laws. All they can do, and all the people expect them to do, is to make speeches. Therefore it doesn't much matter to Irishmen who they return to Parliament, and almost any one who really wants to can secure a seat. Nowadays people even pay the politicians small annual salaries, and receive, it must be confessed, excellent value for their money in the delightfully sonorous speeches which lighten the general dreariness of life, very much as the gibes of court jesters did the lethargy

brought on by the heavy drinking at medieval feasts. When Stephen Butler was a young man the system of salaries had not yet become a necessity. Men of independent means still made the necessary speeches in the spirit of the sportsman who, for the public good, hunt foxes without asking fee or reward. It was probably even easier then than it is now to take part as a public man in the political life of the country.

CHAPTER IX

AT first Stephen Butler's experiences as a Member of Parliament were wholly delightful to him. He associated in close friendship with men who were certainly earnest in their devotion to Ireland. He found himself, when he and they consulted together, in an atmosphere which he could breathe freely and joyfully. His leaders were men of transparent purity of purpose, of charming culture, of high ideals. Nothing they said or did jarred on him or hurt him. It was good too to see the respect and admiration which these Irishmen won in the assembly of Britain's gentlemen. Their speeches, Stephen's own speeches among the rest, were listened to with courteous and flattering attention. They were praised and applauded. Great Ministers went out of their way to congratulate the Irish members on their ability and eloquence. Words of sympathy were spoken. Time was set apart for the consideration of Ireland's claims. Hints were given freely of good things to be done some day not very far off. All this was very pleasing to Stephen and to others like him.

He returned time after time to Dhulough full of hope and satisfaction. He recounted his experiences to his friends, and all of them, save old Rafferty, sympathised with him, because all of them learned to admire and love him. And old Rafferty loved him too, perhaps more than any of the others, though he had no sympathy to offer. He showed his love in other ways. He

allowed Stephen to spend money on the ruinous cottage on the island, and this was no small sacrifice of pride and independence. He received and read the books which Stephen brought him back from Dublin, and almost every book published in those days about Ireland found its way into the old man's little library. In return he brought out his treasured Irish manuscripts, read and translated long passages for Stephen. When the mood was on him he recited many lines from the *Æneid* or perhaps the *Odyssey*. Stephen's scholarship was often at fault. Unless the passage was one familiar to him he missed the sense of what he heard, and was puzzled by the strange pronunciation even of what he knew well. But the hearing of the poetry in such surroundings awakened strange emotions in him. It was a moving thing to sit on the rocks above the sea in summer time, or by the side of a smouldering turf fire when the winter air was cold, and listen to the great hexameters rolling from the lips of the worn old man. The long white beard shook with the exaggerated mouthing of the splendid words. The breeze stirred the unkempt white hair. The grey coat hung patched and ragged round an almost emaciated form. But the gestures of the old man's hands were like those of some king of ancient times who was strong and proud, and Stephen could watch passion flashing from his eyes.

Sometimes he told stories of bygone times. He remembered all the misery of the famine years, and there was a grimness which was horrible in his account of how men and women starved to death. He could tell of the exodus which followed the famine, or the broken men who went hopeless into a new world, leaving their hearts behind them in a land which had

failed to afford them even graves. Then he would quote from the Latin Bible a passage from one of the prophets about the people who went in procession from their homes "hardly bestead and hungry," how they journeyed with much sighing through impenetrable gloom.

But of times later than the famine old Rafferty would not talk. It was in vain that Stephen plied him with questions, lured him with suggestive references. Of the Fenians, their plans and their hopes, of his own part in their ill-fated conspiracy, Rafferty would say nothing. Nor would he give any opinion on current political questions. He seemed apathetic and totally uninterested. When Stephen told of the praise won by the Home Rule party in Parliament the old man only smiled, much as a parent might at the excitement of a child over some new plaything. Stephen was vexed. He hoped to get from Rafferty some word of praise, some expression of sympathy; for he himself was full of hope and meant to do great things for Ireland.

After a while he began to understand something of the meaning of old Rafferty's smile. A sickening doubt began to creep into his heart and mar the pleasure he found in his work in Parliament. It was well, no doubt, to win the respect and admiration of Englishmen, to be cheered and praised. But all the fine eloquence, the flawless reasoning, the impassioned pleading, led to nothing. Kind words and hearty cheers made no difference to the figures tellers announced after divisions. Three years passed and the doubt became a horrible certainty. It appeared to Stephen that the Irish Nationalist members at Westminster were wholly impotent. They were praised as actors are praised on

the stage for brilliant performances, for moving renderings of mighty human passions. But the play came to an end, and the audience, the Englishmen who had clapped their hands, went back to business, the sober business of ordering English affairs for the benefit of English people. The footlights were out. The properties of the piece lay dusty in lumber-rooms. Ireland was forgotten.

But with this result Stephen Butler was wholly dissatisfied. He was in desperate earnest, and entirely convinced that Ireland must somehow win again the constitution which had been filched from her. He drifted over to the extreme left wing of the party to which he belonged. His mind refused to rest satisfied with any compromise. His reading had made him familiar with aspirations a century old. He wanted to see the King, the Lords, and the Commons of Ireland make laws for Ireland again.

It was without any great hope that he allowed himself to be re-elected as a Home Ruler when a new Parliament was called into existence. It was with no great expectation of any good that he scanned the list of the members of his party and noticed the new names that appeared in it. He spent the summer at Dhulough reading much and looking into the affairs of his estate. One day after fishing for a while among the rocks he bade Johnny Darcy, who rowed him, take the boat to the island. He landed as usual on the sandy beach below Rafferty's cottage. The old man's boat, a crazy tub, was there hauled up as usual clear of the high-tide mark. The oars were in her and their blades were still wet. Evidently Rafferty had been making one of his expeditions to the mainland. Stephen called aloud, announcing his presence, and

then climbed over the rocks and crossed the shingle to the cottage. He knocked, and receiving no answer, entered.

Rafferty sat at the table with his horn-rimmed spectacles on his nose, reading intently a paper which lay spread out before him. It was evidently a letter, for the envelope lay on the floor, and Stephen noticed that the stamp was an American one.

Rafferty, conscious at last of his visitor's presence, rose from his chair. He folded the letter and put it in his breast-pocket. Then he spoke. To Stephen's surprise, his manner and way of speaking had undergone a change. The old dreaminess was gone. The man seemed more erect, more vigorous, his voice was stronger.

"The blessing of God on you!" Rafferty had the habit of speaking his greetings in Irish; though except a few simple phrases of greeting and farewell Stephen knew nothing of the language.

"So they tell me, master, that you have been made a Member of Parliament again."

"I have. But to tell you the truth, Rafferty, it's little good I've done there in the past."

"Little indeed. You may well say so. And it's little good there is to be done in it. I could have told you that before ever you went there."

"And why didn't you tell me?"

"How was I to know that you wanted to do anything? You might have been one of the men who think to improve this and improve that and improve the other thing, and leave Ireland where she is, at the latter end of it all."

"They tell me, Rafferty, that you were a Fenian yourself in the old days."

"They told you the truth. I was a Fenian in the days gone by, and I am a Fenian still. My heart's with the men, most of them over the great sea now, who wanted to fight for Ireland, and didn't think much of just talking for her. Sometimes I do be feeling beaten and down, for I'm lonesome here with never a one to talk to that feels as I do. But now and again there comes a letter to me from abroad that sets me up again. I have one to-day from a man that was taken along with me, and we stood in the dock together and were condemned together. They took us on a Sunday outside the chapel door, and we on our way in to mass! They tried us along with the rest. Better men than me were there, men that were good enough to find their death for Ireland, and did find it for her. But that would be too great an honour for me. They shut me up in gaol. They were afraid of us. Death and prison, prison and death, those were the two words that were in their mouths in those days. For we had them scared, scared till the boldest of them went white about the gills. Who have you ever scared with your speeches and your fine behaviour in that Parliament of theirs?"

"But we didn't try to scare them. We wanted to persuade them, to reason with them, to let them see what was right."

Rafferty threw up his hands. The gesture was extraordinarily expressive of amazed contempt. Then without speaking a word he went over to the hearth and began raking with his hands among the powdered ash collecting little fragments of turf in which some spark still lingered.

"Well," said Stephen, "what have you to say to me?"

But Rafferty made no answer. He deliberately piled

his cinders together. Then he took some sods of turf from the creel that stood beside the hearth, broke them with a sharp blow on the stone seat in the chimney corner, and built them carefully round his fire. He added whole sods to the edifice until the cinders he had gathered glowed in the middle of a dull brown pile. Then he went down on his hands and knees and began to blow his fire until the sparks flew upwards, and a flame licked the loose fibres of the turf.

"Rafferty," said Stephen, "stop that and tell me what you mean."

The old man rose to his feet and drew himself up to his full height. Stephen wondered that he seemed so tall.

"Persuade them!" he cried. "Reason with them! Persuade the Sassenach! Reason with the Sassenach! Teach Englishmen to see what is right! Wouldn't you persuade the heels of a stallion as soon when he's hot with good feeding? Wouldn't you reason easier with the horns of a bull and he thinking the field he feeds in is his own? Let him see what is right! Would you speak about the Saints and the ways of Heaven to the cur dog that has his teeth bare at you?"

The fire behind the old man blazed, and his shadow danced huge and fantastic on the wall in front of him. Stephen, standing in the doorway, blocked out the evening light from the cottage. The shadow was black upon the wall. It appeared and disappeared, threatened, as it seemed, and then vanished. It was like some fierce genius of an Arabian tale, menacing reason and life. It pictured the spirit which animated old Rafferty's words and gestures.

"It's the mistake Grattan made. It's the mistake O'Connell made. It's the mistake you are making to-

day. No men in the world ever got justice from the Sassenach. No race, no people, that has felt the blight of their empire ever made them see reason or hear right in any way but the one. Fight them. Threaten them. Scare them. That's the way and that's the only way."

Stephen was silent. There flooded in on him a tide of emotion. Doubtless this was the way in which Ireland had for one brief space gained her constitution. It was men with guns in their hands, men who frightened the English effectually, who had won Ireland's rights for Ireland. But how could the volunteers be enlisted again? Who would repeat the history of a century before?

"And we did it," said Rafferty. "We, a handful of men, frightened them with all their soldiers and their ships of war. And who were we? The Church was against us. The gentry hated us. The most of the people cared nothing for us. Yet we frightened the English. But, sure, we failed."

Suddenly, like the flame of a candle snuffed out, the spirit with which he spoke died in the old man. He sat down on the little stone slab which was fixed in the angle of the hearth, steadying himself with his hands pressed against the wall. He huddled himself together, cowered, seemed to shrink. He covered his ears with his hands, resting his elbows on his knees. Then he began to wail.

"Och, wirrasthrue, and the sorrow, the great sorrow that is on me. Och, the good men and the brave men. They took them and they murdered them."

From his broken English he passed into Irish speech. Stephen came softly from the door and sat down on a stool before the fire. He stretched out his hand and laid it on the old man's arm, but Rafferty took no

notice of his touch. The moaning lament continued like a monotonous chant. Stephen could not understand the words, but he recognised the same phrase occurring again and again, and always uttered very plaintively. He heard now and then what seemed to be lists of names, but in their Irish form he could make nothing of them. By degrees the lament sank lower and lower till it was not possible to hear more than an exclamation now and then. At last there was silence. Stephen spoke, but he received no answer. He withdrew his hand from Rafferty's arm, and sat for a long while gazing into the fire. The flames flickered and danced. Then instead of flames came a dull red glow and a gathering of white ash round the bases of the sods of turf. Suddenly the whole pile collapsed. Powdery ash, exhausted fuel, was scattered across the hearth. Flames shot up out of the debris, and died softly away again. Rafferty stirred in his seat and awoke to consciousness. Stephen rose to go, and held out his hand. The old man took it and held it.

"I'm sorry for you," said Stephen. "In my heart I feel for you in all you have suffered."

"O passi graviora dabit deus his quoque finem," said Rafferty. "And the end won't be far off for me now, if it's the will of God. I've had my share of trouble, but it's little I'd think of it if I could see the young men with spirit in them and love of the old land."

Still holding Stephen's hand in his he walked to the door of the cottage.

"The blessing of God on you," said Rafferty. "It's a good true heart that's in you, and if it's the will of God you'll do a good day's work for Ireland yet. But who knows? Maybe you'll only break your heart like the rest of us."

Stephen left the cottage and went down to the boat. In the stern of it sat Johnny Darcy puffing at his pipe. Stephen noticed the man's face particularly as he approached the boat, struck by the strong contrast between it and Rafferty's. Both were unmistakably Irish faces. In both the physical features were somewhat the same. There were the same deep-set eyes, shadowed by prominent brows; the same small mouths, the same length between the cheek-bone and the jaw. There was, too, the possibility of the same kind of expression on both faces. Neither of them could be the face of a dull or a sensual man. But the intelligence within had marked Rafferty's face in one way. It was intellectual, and no careful observer could have doubted that Rafferty was an altruist and a spiritual man. Darcy's intelligence had developed along a different line. His face suggested a capacity for self-repression, too, but it was the self-repression necessary for continued dissimulation, the self-repression of the habitually cunning man.

"I do be wondering often," said Darcy, as he got out the oars, "at the pleasure the gentry takes in talking to old Rafferty. There isn't a week in the year, unless it's terrible wet entirely, but Mr. Hegarty has the boat out to go to the island. And if it isn't him that has it it's Father Staunton, and they bringing something, be the same more or less, to the old man. I wonder now that if so be that Rafferty was gone, and there's none of us but has to go some time, let alone an old man like him—I wonder now if your honour would give me a lease of the island? Sure, I'd tell stories to yourself and the clergy as well as another if that was what you wanted; and it would suit me to be earning my living that way better than pulling the arms out of my shoulders with the oars."

"But old Rafferty did something to deserve a quiet old age," said Stephen. "He didn't spend his days at the door of the public-house drinking every shilling he earned."

"Is it myself that you mean when you speak of drinking? But it's joking you are, your honour. And, any way, what did Rafferty ever do beyond teaching the boys and girls in the barns in the winter time? And teaching what no one living, unless maybe the clergy or the like of yourself, has any call to know. Is it for that you'd be caring for him now?"

"For that and other things."

"Maybe it's because he was a Fenian and went to gaol? Well now, aren't you the queer people entirely? Well I mind the Fenian days. The gentlemen that did be out fishing with me would talk of hanging the blackguards in a way that would make you feel hanging was too good for them. And Father Staunton would be warning the boys from off the altar not to be joining secret societies. And now there's nothing too good for one of the same blackguards that gets out without having his neck twisted on him. But sure if it's the like of the Fenians you want, there's boys in the country yet will give you your 'nough of that sort of work."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, it's not for me to be talking, but I hear there's bad feeling about the doings beyond there."

Johnny Darcy nodded his head sideways as he spoke, indicating that the bad feeling was existent southwards, somewhere in and around the village of Cuslough. Stephen asked no more questions. He knew that the people on Lord Daintree's estate had paid their rents with the utmost difficulty for two years, and that most of those on the Snell property, where the rents had

been raised, were heavily in arrear. He knew that Mr. Manders had already evicted a score or so of the poorest of them, and was threatening to clear the whole countryside and lay it down in big grass farms. It was, besides, a bad year. The potato crop had been wretched, and cattle were fetching a low price at the fairs. It seemed likely enough that there would be bad feeling.

Johnny Darcy rested on his oars and leaned forward. He spoke in a low, confidential tone.

"There's notices posted up on the walls beyond and staring at you out of the windows of the shops, saying that the people is to go to a meeting on Sunday after mass. Paddy Heverin, the publican, has given the use of his field. And the word has gone out that the same meeting will be worth attending. Father O'Sullivan is to speak to the boys—and it's himself can do it. And a Member of Parliament is to be there. But sure, you're a Member yourself and know more about it than a poor man like me."

Johnny Darcy did not mention that, poor man as he was, he knew a good deal about the meeting that was to be held. He had, in fact, been employed in erecting the platform in Heverin's field, and afterwards, while drinking in Heverin's public-house, had picked up a good deal of gossip about the meeting. He knew, for instance, that the Member of Parliament who was to be the chief orator of the day had been induced to attend by an assurance given confidentially by Heverin that Stephen Butler knew all about the meeting and approved of its objects. He knew also that the proposal to invite Stephen to attend had been definitely vetoed by Father O'Sullivan. He had given information enough, as he thought, to secure the goodwill of Mr.

Butler. He had not given enough to incur the displeasure of Father O'Sullivan or Mr. Heverin. He began to row again, well satisfied with himself.

To Stephen the news was not very exciting or interesting. He did not see what either Father O'Sullivan or the Member of Parliament, whoever he might be, could do to prevent Lord Daintree getting his rents or Mr. Snell from having his tenants evicted. The subject was to him an intensely unpleasant one. He hated to think of the struggles of people who were really poor to meet heavy rents. He hated to think of the misery which followed evictions. But the whole business seemed to him inevitable. He let his thoughts drift back to the conversation with Rafferty. That had stirred and really interested him. What he heard fitted in very well with his own experience of parliamentary life. It did seem a vain thing to try to make English people or English statesmen listen to reason, unless behind the reason there was force. And an appeal to force seemed perfectly hopeless. There was the dilemma. Reason was hopeless. Force was useless. Was there any middle way?

They reached the shore. Stephen, with two or three of the largest of his fish in his basket, walked up to Dhulough House. He dined alone at a little table spread for him opposite the fireplace. The evenings were damp, and the old dining-room, except in the warmest weather, was chilly without a fire. Opposite him, above the chimney-piece, hung an old print representing the Irish House of Commons in session in College Green. Rows of somewhat prim gentlemen in knee breeches, with frilled shirt fronts and powdered heads, faced each other. The grim features of old Stephen Butler were recognisable. He did not seem so

fine a gentleman as many of those among whom he sat. He had not the intellectual face of the orator who stood with outstretched arm addressing the House. Perhaps old Stephen had no great belief in oratory, though he lived in an age when speeches were reckoned mighty things. Certainly it was not on record of him that he spoke much.

What had those gentlemen, with their clean-shaved faces and fine clothes, with their taste for speechifying and their readiness for duelling—what had they made of the puzzle of Ireland's relations with England? In the end enough of them had been bribed or bullied into solving the riddle in England's way. But before that, before money was to be had for the asking, and coronets waited for the men who chose to put them on, which horn of the dilemma had they chosen? Had they relied on reason or force when they demanded their rights?

Stephen sat looking at their faces as he drank his wine. He knew very well what answer to give to the question he asked. Behind him—and he did not have to turn and look to call it to remembrance—hung another picture. In it some of these same gentlemen pranced extravagantly on horses outside the Parliament House, and rows of armed men—their friends, their tenants, or the workmen from the workshops of the north—stood ready. There were cannons among them, and out of the mouths of the cannons belched the smoke of burnt gunpowder. The whole army, for it was an army, gathered round the statue of William of Orange, a monarch not much beloved to-day by Irish people, but whose right to the crown he wore was based solely on a people's will; whose history provides a sufficient precedent to men who take arms in their

hands to assert natural human rights against the divine rights claimed by those who rule wrongly. It was sufficiently evident that the gentlemen in silk stockings among whom his grandfather sat had not shrunk from the appeal to force when reason failed them.

But then, they had force ; guns and swords in their hands ; men, drilled men in uniforms, with guns and swords behind them. What force had Rafferty and his associates ? What more hopeless than force against England now ? The dilemma remained. Reason was useless. Force was hopeless. Was there a middle way ?

Then suddenly there flashed on him the recollection of a chance discussion during the last session of the old Parliament. He had been slack in his attendance, having lost interest in the performance of a meaningless drama. But he had heard of a small band of men of his own party who had adopted new tactics—outrageous, unfair, ungentlemanly tactics, said the older men—and he, hearing vaguely of their doings, had agreed. What if these men had hit on a new way of using force—a way that was not hopeless ? It might be that by insulting the dignity of England, by outraging the decencies of public life, by defying all the unwritten rules which regulate the actions of gentlemen, by doing things never done or dreamed of before, they might oblige Englishmen to listen at last. Reason clearly was useless. He had tried it, and he knew. Force, as Rafferty understood the use of it, was hopeless. All the armed men were on the other side. But there might be, there was, a middle way, a new kind of force which unarmed men could use.

CHAPTER X

IN the village of Cuslough there are three principal buildings. The police barrack stands at one end of the street, a neat, two-storied house, with whitewashed walls. Five windows face the road, three in the upper story and one on each side of the door below. All of them have black, loopholed iron shutters flung back and fastened to the wall on each side. Behind these men armed with carbines or rifles might lurk securely and fire upon a mob outside. These shutters were erected at the time of the Fenian scare, when retired military officers used to write letters to the newspapers every day detailing plans for fortifying country houses. In those days governments were more honest than they have been since. It was not pretended that the police was a civil force, existing for the protection of Irish citizens from thieves and vagabonds. It was frankly owned, by loopholed shutters and otherwise, that a military garrison held the country down. In front of the police barrack was a stretch of neatly raked gravel; beside it was a trim garden where flowers grew, vegetables flourished, and two skeps of bees made a pleasant humming in the summer time. The gravel in front of the barrack and the garden beside it were the only neat things then in the village of Cuslough. The barrack itself was by far the best-kept building.

Half-way down the street stood the public-house, Paddy Heverin's establishment. There were other

public-houses in the village—five more of them, but Paddy Heverin's was the largest and the grandest. Like the police barrack, it was a two-storied building and had a slate roof. Outside the door was a litter of broken packing-cases and a pile of empty porter barrels. One window was decorated with bottles containing brandy, whisky, gin, ginger cordial, and some rarer beverages. The other window displayed an assortment of mixed goods, rolls of flannel and tweed, tobacco pipes, castor oil, and even, oddly enough, a number of tooth-brushes. A splendid picture of a steamer rushing over a glassy sea occupied a place of honour in this window. Paddy Heverin was a dealer in things in general and an emigration agent. He was reputed to be a wealthy man, and probably report spoke the truth. There is a good deal of money to be made in Ireland out of the sale of whisky and porter, and a good deal out of the sale of tickets to America. Also, although the fact was not proclaimed in the windows of the shop, Paddy Heverin was the banker—that is to say the money-lender—of the community. Almost every one was more or less in debt to Heverin.

Further on, at the far end of the street from the police barrack, stood the Roman Catholic church, a long, low building with pebble-dashed walls. But here and there the dashing had peeled off and left bare patches of rough stone exposed to view. The windows, save that their sides curved upwards into a point, had no appearance of ecclesiastical design. They were filled with small diamond-shaped panes of glass. Their woodwork and the doors at the west end were painted, apparently long ago, after the fashion called oak graining. The building was cruciform, and all four gable ends were decorated with plain black iron crosses.

From the doors of this church the people streamed on Sunday after midday mass. A few, forming a kind of bodyguard for Paddy Heverin, turned to the left and passed out of sight into the public-house. But most of the crowd went the other way. By far the greater number of them were men. The women had attended an earlier mass, and were at home doing the business of their houses. The men slouched along the road in groups. There was little talking and no laughing among them. A Connacht crowd is still a depressing thing to see. There is no romping, no singing, no shouting of jests among the young people; no briskness or vigour among the middle-aged. Then, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a heavy sadness hung over all Ireland. The people were dejected, cowed, almost hopeless. These men dragged their way slowly along the road. They passed the last house of the village, and then the great gates of Lord Daintree's demesne, where the ornamental gate lodge stood and an army pensioner peered at them curiously. Then for a mile the road was shadowed by Lord Daintree's high boundary wall and the branches of his trees which stretched over it. Opposite the demesne wall, nearly a mile from the village, was Dean Ponsonby's church, which had once been, and still was called, a cathedral. Beyond it was another wall, not so high as Lord Daintree's but high enough to shut out all view of the rectory land within. Between these two walls the road ran, gloomy, like a tunnel.

But there was an end to the walls at last, and the slouching groups of men emerged into the open and the sunlight. Below them to the left lay Paddy Heverin's field, the scene of the meeting they had come to attend. At one end of it, up against the wall which

shut in the demesne, was a platform, rudely built of rough planks laid on empty porter barrels. Some of the men entered the field at once. More of them sat on the low boundary wall; others stood in groups on the road.

There was a noise of wheels coming from the direction of the village. Some one said—

“Here they are.”

But there was little movement or sign of excitement in the crowd. A few heads were turned and a few eyes looked down the road. That was all. Then a high dog-cart, drawn by a swift, fine horse, came in sight.

“It’s not them at all. It’s the agent,” said some one.

Mr. Manders drove up and stopped in the middle of the crowd. He was on his way home from church, and wore, as men did then on Sundays, a silk hat and a long frock coat. A few of the men deliberately, even ostentatiously, turned their backs on him. But most of them stood staring apathetically at the good horse with its glittering harness and the fine clothes of the gentleman who drove it.

“What are you doing here, boys?” asked Mr. Manders. His tone was cheery and friendly. He liked the people among whom he had lived for years—liked them, though he sometimes bullied and always despised them.

No one answered him, but one or two men, the older men, took off their hats and held them in their hands. Mr. Manders’ eyes swept round the crowd. Then singling out one of those who stood with his back towards the trap, he spoke again.

“Johnny Darcy, you’ve got a tongue in your head. Speak out man, and tell me what you’re all here for.”

Johnny Darcy turned slowly, and displayed a sulky face.

"What business of yours is it what we're doing?"

"Take off your hat when you speak to a gentleman." There was no friendliness in Mr. Manders' tone now. His words were sharp and clipped short. Darcy hesitated for a moment, but the man's ancestors had been serfs for generations, and the old instinct of obedience prevailed. He raised his hand and lifted his soft felt hat. Then pausing he scratched his head, as if to show that it was for his own comfort and not out of respect for Mr. Manders that he raised the hat. Finally he removed it from his head altogether, and stood holding it in his hands. But there was still sulkiness in his face, and an evil, furtive glitter in his eyes. Mr. Manders surveyed him for a minute in silence. Then he spoke to the crowd, and when he did so almost every man removed his hat.

"I know well enough what you're here for. You're here to let yourselves be persuaded into the same kind of blackguardism that's going on in other parts of the country. Now you take my word for it, boys, it won't do. Do you hear me? It won't do. You know me, and the kind of man I am. You won't frighten me out of doing my duty, and if you try, it will be the worse for yourselves. I know what I'm talking about, and you don't know what you're doing. You'll be sorry for yourselves if you go on with this business. You're respectable men the most of you, with wives and families and homes of your own. You've nothing to gain and everything to lose by coming here to listen to some infernal agitator or other who doesn't care a rap about you so long as he makes enough money out of you to pay for whisky to fill his dirty skin. Now, if you've any sense left in you, you'll go quietly home."

"Faith, your honour's right." The words came from

a wizened old man who stood on the outskirts of the crowd. Mr. Manders looked round and recognised the speaker. He would have been better pleased if it had been some one else. This old man had a summons out against him for poaching. Mr. Manders would sit in judgment on him in the Petty Sessions court next day. He suspected that this testimony to the wisdom of his words was uttered with an eye to the effect it might have on the severity of the sentence to be passed for the poaching. No one else spoke, but men eyed each other furtively, fearfully. Each man wondered how far the advice of the agent had appealed to his neighbour.

Mr. Manders whipped his horse and drove on. He believed that he had done right, a plainly, unquestionably right thing. He had heard and read of the Land League, then just started. He believed it to be a conspiracy of men bent on avoiding the payment of just debts. He foresaw that the spread of the conspiracy would involve the country in a sharp struggle; but of the final issue of the struggle he had not the slightest doubt. He and his class would be put to great trouble, great expense, and, possibly, some risk. But they would win. Law and common honesty would be vindicated. The payment of debts would be enforced. The men who entered the conspiracy would be beaten in the end, but not until they, or many of them, had suffered frightful misery and loss. The agitators—the self-seeking and abominable demagogues, who for their own purposes deluded the unhappy people—would escape scot free. This was Mr. Manders' view of the situation. His mouth was set firm as he realised the nature of the struggle before him. There was a fierce light in his eyes when he thought of the men whose speechifying would work the mischief,

After the agent disappeared there was some low talking among the men on the road. They gathered into new groups. There were signs of wavering among some of the older men. Then Johnny Darcy spoke—

“Is any of you going home? I say, is there any man wants to go home? If there is, let him go and be damned. And let him mind himself after. The dark nights is coming on. Let him mind himself. That’s all.”

Mr. Manders was plainly a strong man. Mr. John Darcy was apparently an unscrupulous man. It is not pleasant to be placed between two such forces. It is especially unpleasant when your body is half starved and the courage gone out of your heart; when you are likely to want no courage at all very soon, because you are to be starved right out in the course of the following winter and spring. Few men under such circumstances play the part of heroes.

Again there came the noise of wheels approaching from the village. This time a car came into sight quickly followed by another. On the first sat Mr. Paddy Heverin and three of his chosen friends. They had a jovial, almost a reckless, air. Mr. Heverin was certainly not half starved. A bulging paunch strained the buttons of his attire. His companions may have been stinted in the matter of food, but they had apparently had enough to drink since they left the church. On the second car sat Father O’Sullivan and a strange gentleman supposed, and quite rightly, to be the Member of Parliament, whose speech was to be the event of the day.

Johnny Darcy took off his hat and called for cheers. A wavering, half-hearted response was all the crowd gave. Mr. Manders’ advice stuck in their minds.

Could it be that they were going to commit themselves to some great act of folly?

Mr. Heverin walked across the field to the platform. Men's hats were doffed to him. It was a bad thing to owe rent to Mr. Manders; but it was an infinitely worse thing to owe money to Mr. Heverin. In the case of rent the sum was fixed. It was oppressive, terrible, impossible perhaps, but it was fixed. A man knew what he owed and could face the worst. But what man, whose name once found a place on Heverin's books, could tell how much he owed? Pounds were scraped together and paid across the counter. Baskets of eggs were carried into the shop by weary wives, fowls fattened with meal that might have fed children were brought at Christmas time, the services of boys and girls were given, but the debt grew no less. There might be hearts bold enough to refuse homage to Mr. Manders, but not Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would have failed to abase themselves, under similar circumstances, before Heverin.

Heverin mounted the platform.

"Fellow-countrymen," he said, "and country fellows! Men of Connacht, yes, and men of Ireland, assembled on this momentous occasion to break for ever the chains of the yoke with which tyrants have bound you."

At this point the orator's memory failed him. He had written out and learned off by heart an impressive speech. It was all of it, his friends assured him, quite up to the level of the opening sentence. But who can answer for the tricks of a treacherous memory? Who would suspect a memory of playing tricks at all after being so recently invigorated with three bottles of porter and six glasses of whisky? But Mr. Heverin struggled on. He involved his audience in various metaphors.

Links of chains and shining swords were forged ; the green fields of old Ireland and the flames of hell struggled together in his sentences. The audience listened with equal indifference to invocations of ancient heroes, Members of Parliament and local tyrants. Then a recollection of the prepared peroration, or the last sentence of it, flashed on Mr. Heverin.

"I call upon you to welcome the gentleman, the patriotic gentleman, who travelling over sea and land, braving the terrors of the roaring deep and the poison of the foeman's steel, has come to-day to point you out the road to liberty."

Mr. Heverin wiped his brow with a large spotted pocket-handkerchief and descended. He took his seat on a stone and leaned back against one of the porter barrels which supported the platform. He had done his duty by Ireland, and there were two newspaper reporters present.

The Member of Parliament succeeded him. He also spoke largely, flamboyantly. But there was a difference. This man was in earnest. He had in him a fire which burned. He wanted something and wanted it intensely. But the men before him, the lean, overwrought toilers in barren fields, remained indifferent, dull. The speaker paused and looked at their faces. Was it possible to rouse in these men the frenzied love of freedom, the passionate devotion to Ireland, which burned in him? He made his appeal. He flung out great sentiments, clothed in ridiculous bombastic words. The crowd did not cheer. Then changing his subject he spoke to them about the land.

"It should be yours," he said. "It was your fathers' long ago. Strangers have come and robbed you of your heritage. Strangers lay their rents upon you and

make you pay. They threaten you. You and your children starve."

At last he caught their attention. Here was something that touched them. Now they knew the meaning of what he said.

"You toil," he went on. "You labour late and early. Your wives work with you in the fields. Your children go hungry. The rain comes in through the roofs of your houses and drips upon you while you sleep. The strangers take the fruits of your toil. They eat the harvest of the fields that your hands drained and fenced and ploughed and sowed and reaped. They eat it and grow fat."

They cheered him now. The thing he said was true. Had not they passed by the painted gate lodge of Lord Daintree's house, the habitation of his menial, a place far better to live in than the best of their cabins were? Had not Mr. Manders driven past them with a sleek, strong horse and glittering harness?

Then came the appeal that they should band themselves together as their fellow-sufferers did elsewhere; that they should resist oppression, win fair terms for themselves, gain security, comfort, and a good reward for all their work. The crowd was apathetic no longer. Backs bowed with long toil of digging, straightened in response to his words. Into eyes, hitherto expressionless of every emotion save patient endurance, came the light of resolve. Instead of accustomed despair there was a sudden gleam of hope. Could such things be? Security, comfort, good reward, could such things be on this side of paradise?

Father O'Sullivan followed the Member of Parliament. The people knew him. As Father Staunton's curate he served Cuslough chapel. But never before had they

seen him look as he looked then. His face was grim and set and strong. His body was tense and stiff. His two hands were clenched tight. His arms lay like rigid bars straight along his sides.

"Men," he said, "last year twenty of you who are tenants on the Snell estate were evicted from your farms; where are those twenty and their families now? Some have gone across the sea to America. You will know them no more. They will not return or see their native land. They went in sorrow. In sorrow they will live. And yet their lot is happier than that of those who remained. Where are they? Some have found shelter in the homes of their neighbours. They are eating the bread of charity, the bread of dependence; eating it in bitterness of heart because there is not enough of it for them and you. They are miserable. But there are worse than they. Where are the rest? Where are ten out of the twenty families? Some, little children and weak women, are in their graves. May God have mercy on their souls! They are at rest. But the men who are strong and cannot die, the women and the children for whom no merciful release has come? Where are they? Paupers in the prison they call a workhouse. Paupers, branded with a shame that will be upon their children and their children's children after them. Are not these things true?"

There was a deep murmur of assent, a sullen, angry growl. The men before him knew the facts, understood the meaning of them, even better than he did.

"And before this year is past twenty more of you, and next year twenty after that, will be cast out from your homes, driven to exile or death or shame. You know that this also is true.

"Is there any remedy? I say there is, if you are

men enough to take it. I ask you to break no law of God or man. I ask you to do no more than you have every right to do. But I ask you to do it without fear, without shrinking, without favour to friend or brother or child."

The crowd hung silent upon his words, breathless with expectation. Slowly, in the simplest possible words, with many repetitions lest his meaning might be mistaken, he repeated the advice given already more than once in Ireland; placed in the people's hands a weapon more terrible than gun or pike, the weapon whose use no laws devised as yet have availed to check. He bid them shun, treat as a stranger and an enemy, the man who took a farm from which another had been evicted.

"Neither eat nor drink with him. Neither buy nor sell with him. Let him and his wife and his children be as lepers and outcasts. Do not take him by the hand. Do not help him in his work. Do not talk with him. Do not pray with him."

He ended. The crowd which had gathered in the field broken-spirited, nerveless cowards were men now. They shouted, waved gaunt hands, stretched lean arms up to heaven, swore aloud that they would fight to the last the battle which lay before them.

Paddy Heverin, greatly moved by the priest's words and inspired by the contents of a bottle he had emptied since he spoke, struggled to his feet.

"It's a proud day," he said. "The proudest in my life. Let me shake you by the hand, Father. I will shake your hand if every landlord out of hell was to bid me let it go. Give me your hand, Father, and let me shake it."

He held by the edge of the platform and stretched

out his right hand. It was not the priest's he caught, but Johnny Darcy's. But that mattered very little to him. He wrung it, waving it from side to side and declaiming—

“I'll take an honest man by the hand—any honest man. I'm an honest man, and so is Father O'Sullivan, God bless him ; and you're an honest man, and we're all honest men, and I'll take you by the hand, ‘And if the colour we must wear is England's cruel red——’”

Johnny Darcy conveyed him, still breathing out patriotism to the tune of “The wearing of the green,” to his car. Sympathetic admirers hoisted him, not without difficulty, on to the seat. So rapidly had the new spirit of mutual help spread among the people that there was a contest for the honourable duty of sitting beside Heverin and holding him safe. It was Johnny Darcy who secured the privilege. Two more of the great man's admirers climbed on to the other side of the car. One of them, to lighten the burden of Darcy's responsibility, stretched an arm across the well of the car and gripped Heverin's coat collar. The party reached Cuslough safely, and the three ministering angels, reaping the reward of their charity, drank to the success of the Land League and the glory of Ireland in the room behind Heverin's bar. It was understood that they drank at their host's expense, therefore they drank freely. Heverin himself slept off the effects of patriotic endeavour on an uncomfortable horsehair sofa in the parlour.

CHAPTER XI

THAT man had a sense of the picturesque who first applied the word revolution to those upheavals which every now and then alter the appearance of society. The ancient Romans, avoiding metaphor, called them simply new conditions; but this man—Frenchman, German, Englishman, or whatever he was—saw society as a huge cart-wheel. It was stuck in the mud, and a team of exhausted fates tugged at it with no better result than now and then to make it revolve spasmodically, jerkily. No doubt in a perfectly ordered society, the socialist state of modern dreamers, the wheel would roll slowly, evenly, so that no one would remain underneath it long enough to have cause for complaint, or on top long enough to really enjoy himself. But we have not yet achieved this smooth rolling. Our wheel remains fixed, stuck fast, while those underneath groan horribly, and those on top become convinced that its position is part of the fixed order of the universe. They cannot believe that they will ever occupy anything except their pleasant position, and laugh when the submerged portion of the community grumbles and threatens. Indeed, such are the enormous advantages which those on the upper part of the wheel possess, that a revolution would be almost impossible if it were not for their over-confidence.

Thus, in the revolution which took place in Ireland during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, power, pleasant patronage, and a good deal of property were taken from the landlord class and given to those who never before possessed any such things. But at the beginning of the revolution, at the time when the wheel which had stuck fast for more than two hundred years began to groan and quiver, nobody could believe that the matter would end in an actual revolution. It seemed far more likely that the emaciated fates which are harnessed to the Irish nation would give up their effort, and let the wheel settle down again into its old position.

Mr. Manders, for instance, heard an account of the Land League meeting from the wizened poacher who was awaiting his sentence. But he didn't believe that anything of real importance had occurred. He felt quite strong enough to deal with the forces of local disorder, sneered at the eloquence of the M.P., cursed Father O'Sullivan for a truculent priest, and laughed heartily at Paddy Heverin's share in the proceedings. His attitude was typical of that of his class. The Irish gentry and their agents were individually strong men, so strong and fearless that they did not feel the necessity for union among themselves, so independent and self-confident that not one of them would have been willing to submit to the guidance of a leader even if their class had produced one. Their self-confidence was their ruin. Frightened into union they might have successfully resisted the organised attacks of their enemies; as individuals they were perfectly helpless. And when in the end they were frightened, instead of looking to each other for help and selecting a leader from their own ranks, they went whining and fawning

round the knees of English statesmen who had their own affairs to look after, and were by no means anxious to compromise themselves by espousing the extremely unpopular cause of the Irish landlords. Thus the revolution was effected, not indeed bloodlessly, but extremely quickly and quite effectively.

Lord Daintree, possessing a great deal more political insight than his agent, being in fact one of the few who really understood what was happening round about him, formed a fair estimate of the strength of the movement which was to loose his hold upon his own property, and destroy the power of his class throughout Ireland.

"I told you long ago there'd be trouble," he said to Mr. Manders, who told him the story of the meeting at Cuslough.

"Oh, I don't think this amounts to anything much," said the agent. "I shall have to evict a few more of these poor wretches during the autumn, but there will be no difficulty in getting new tenants for the farms."

"They'll probably shoot you," said Lord Daintree, "and I shall have to get a new agent. I don't take much to the idea of being shot. At my time of life a man has to be careful of himself. I think I'll go over to London and stay there. I'm glad you've no wife and family, Manders. A decent tombstone will be as much as I shall be expected to do for you. If you've any particular fancy about the inscription you might let me know."

"All right," said Manders, smiling.

"By the way," said Lord Daintree, "if there should be any trouble about letting any of the farms that you have to clear the people off, I think I should offer them to that fellow Heverin. I'm like the clergyman whom

Browning wrote about. In the course of a long life I have known seven-and-twenty leaders of revolts, and in every case the leader, that is to say, the local leader, has been more anxious about feathering his own nest than anything else."

Mr. Manders laughed. Lord Daintree's estimate of Paddy Heverin's character was based on a general knowledge of popular leaders. It fitted in very well with his own ideas of Heverin's patriotism and public spirit.

Dean Ponsonby, who was present during this conversation, took a very serious view of the new agitation. He had himself been the victim of a minor revolution. The last time the wheel shook it had brought the finances and privileges of his church crashing to the ground.

"You'll see," he said to Mr. Manders, "more will come out of this than you think. There's no security for any kind of property, once the Church has been robbed. It's a shame for men like young Stephen Butler who are landlords and gentlemen themselves to be mixed up with this kind of thing."

"Oh," said Lord Daintree, "I don't suppose Stephen Butler admires Heverin and his Land League any more than we do. He's a sentimental Nationalist, but he won't care for his tenants striking against paying rent."

"Well, then," said the Dean, "he ought to withdraw from the whole connection, and make it plain that he doesn't countenance the agitation."

"You'd better go and tell him so," said Manders.

"I will," said the Dean; "but I don't think I ought to go alone. A deputation of the gentry ought to wait on him and explain what they think of his conduct."

"Oh, well, you can hardly expect me to join in that," said Manders. "I am his agent, you know, and he mightn't take it well from me."

"I think you are the man to go, Mr. Dean," said Lord Daintree. "After all, it's your business to give men good advice. If he will not hearken to an apron and a pair of gaiters, neither will he be persuaded though all the gentry in the county waited on him."

The Dean lost no time. He saddled his horse next morning, and rode to Dhulough. Stephen Butler received him hospitably, and invited him to stay for luncheon. But the Dean, like the young prophet who came to Bethel in the days of Jeroboam, was determined neither to eat bread or drink water lest such friendliness should deprive his message of its weight. He waved away the suggestion of refreshment and plunged at once into his business.

"Mr. Butler," he said, "this is no social call. I come to-day as a clergyman, as a dignitary of the Church, to speak a solemn word of warning to you. I hope you will not take it amiss; but whether you hear or whether you forbear, I am bound to speak out."

Stephen Butler hastily probed his conscience, searching for the recollection of some misdeed which might justify the extreme solemnity of the Dean's tone. He found no convenient crime of which he might accuse himself. He had paid subscriptions to the Church punctually, even willingly. He had attended with a smiling face functions called diocesan synods, dreadful in their dullness. He had listened on such occasions to the Dean's expositions of the financial position of the Church, and had refrained from asking whether the Kingdom of God were in reality an affair of pounds, shillings, and pence, or how the Dean had been

appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer to the Almighty. His conscience was at rest. He could not see what evil deed had called down this visitation.

The Dean began to preach, and was thoroughly happy. There are two kinds of preaching, the sort that is done in public from pulpits and platforms, and the sort that is done privately to one or, at most, two victims at a time. The clergy have no monopoly of either kind of sermon. The joy of delivering the first sort is shared by them with politicians, local and parliamentary, and the whole class of persons to whom the sound of their own voices in public places is agreeable. Many people like being preached to in this way. This is especially the case in Ireland, and Sunday, being an off day on which no work can be done, except by certain privileged classes, priests, publicans, policemen, and politicians, the people throng on Sundays to listen to those who preach. The Protestant clergy satisfy the natural cravings of their congregations for Sunday oratory by delivering themselves of long discourses in church. The Roman Catholic clergy lay more stress upon the purely liturgical parts of Divine Service, and so their people, hungry for fine words, go after mass to listen to politicians. But whether by clergy or politicians, the sermons are preached and the people go home contented. But the second kind of sermon, that delivered to a solitary victim, is not popular. The man who preaches it must have a real vocation for the work. He catches his victim with extreme difficulty, and holds him to the end by sheer force of a dominating will. He is disliked afterwards by every one to whom he has ever preached. Politicians never preach in private. They, poor men, depend upon their popularity for their daily bread, and dare not risk

the delivery of private exhortations. Nor do the clergy of any Church practise this sort of preaching much, which is fortunate. The clergy, in Ireland, are unpopular enough without that. The people who sacrifice themselves for the good of their neighbours by delivering chamber homilies, are for the most part elderly men and women with established positions and pensions from the Government. They are also people with a real vocation for their work.

Dean Ponsonby, though a clergyman, had such a vocation. As a pulpit orator he was lightly esteemed. As a setter forth of righteous ways in private he was unsurpassed and immensely disliked. Mr. Manders, whose heart was harder than a millstone, whom neither pulpiteer or politician could move beyond the fixed sum of his subscription to the extent of half a crown, shuddered and paid up when the Dean caught him alone. Lord Daintree might venture to be flippant beforehand, but he repented, cowering, when the Dean assumed the mantle of a prophet and announced that he had come to pay "no social call." Once, but never again, Lord Daintree had ventured to express his feelings, using the words uttered by an impious king under similar circumstances, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" He had been quelled, as doubtless Ahab also was, by the prophet's eye. Mr. Hegarty of late years had fled, shamelessly and very swiftly, to remote places when he suspected that the Dean came to his house charged with a few of those friendly words which it is better, in the opinion of the preacher, to speak quite plainly.

Stephen Butler had never before been subjected to such exhortation, but, at the Dean's first words, he felt an awful presage of what was coming. Thus the man

with troublesome corns knows beforehand that it is going to rain. Thus the highly specialised instinct of the Minister of State warns him, even if he does not scrutinise the results of by-elections, that the voters who placed his party in power are beginning to think it about time that the other fellows had a turn. With a like presentiment of an evil time, Stephen Butler sat down and waited. The Dean stood up and preached.

His appearance was impressive. His gaiters, slightly mud-spotted, told of foul roads braved for duty's sake. His apron hung gracefully almost to his knees. His broad cincture lay unstrained and creaseless over a finely rounded paunch. Not a button of his long, straight coat showed a metal skeleton beneath its skin of good broad-cloth. He spoke of the rights of property, of loyalty, and of Stephen Butler's position in the county. He denounced agitators, socialists, atheists, nationalists, and other bad people. He mentioned with approval the British Constitution and the Decalogue. He quoted several of the remarks which Solomon made about fools, and part of one of the verses of "God Save the Queen." He descended from generalities and became personal. Stephen learned that he was one of those who scatter firebrands; who take dogs by the ears; who encourage, if they do not actually commit, breaches of the sixth and eighth commandments; whose knavish tricks good men, after public meetings and when listening to military bands, implore the Almighty to confound.

He was too bruised and battered when the address was finished to attempt any defence of himself. He sat still until the Dean, pleased as all living things are with the right performance of a congenial function, coming to the end of his homily, smiled. With some-

thing of the air of a father he approached Stephen and laid a plump, white hand on his shoulder.

"You'll think over what I've been saying. I do not press you to say anything to me now. That would be premature; but you'll give my words earnest consideration. Believe me, I speak for your own good."

Apparently the business was over.

"Won't you," said Stephen, "take a glass of wine? Just allow me to ring the bell."

He thought that the Dean probably wanted a glass of wine, and the desire to impart one was creditable to him. So an early martyr, after the lictors had packed up their rods again, might have offered a denarius wherewith to buy a cup of Falerian wine to the chief executioner, grown somewhat hoarse with counting the strokes. The Dean hesitated. But the spirit of the prophet in him subdued the flesh. He felt that brown sherry might soften his heart, or the drinking of it rob his words of weight.

"Another day," he said. "Some other day. To-day I must be getting home. Good day, Mr. Butler, and remember, I should not have been here to-day if I had not wished you well; if I had not been sincerely anxious for your future."

Stephen, since the Dean insisted on keeping to the part of the prophet of Bethel, lunched alone; but he ate without any very good appetite. He was not angry with the Dean. He accepted the assurance that the lecture had been kindly meant, and even admired the courage of the man who delivered it. Nothing would have induced Stephen himself to approach a defenceless fellow-creature in cold blood and shoot off a sermon at him. He believed that what was impossible for him must be very difficult for any one else. But the subject-

matter of the rebuke worried him. He realised quite plainly for the first time that he was going to be very unpopular with men of his own class. At first the men whom he met in his clubs had been content to argue with him in a good-humoured way. He was, in their eyes, a well-intentioned sentimentalist; a young fool, whose silly fads would be cured by the passing of years. Now he saw that these gentlemen of Ireland were being touched on the raw by the new Land League; that they would not be tolerant of any one who was mixed up with the accursed thing. It was not easy to face the kind of unpopularity which Stephen saw before him. Yet he would have faced it bravely enough and made no complaint if there had not been at the back of his mind a doubt—a fear that the gentlemen might be right, the Dean even might be right, in their estimate of the Land League.

Stephen was not in the least shaken in his nationalism. He still believed whole-heartedly in the right of Ireland to regulate her own affairs. But he heard and read very disquieting things about the Land League. He recognised that the Irish tenants were often hardly treated, that their position was singularly insecure, and that many landlords failed to do their duty. He did not like the methods which were adopted to set those wrong things right. He dreaded extremely lest the battle of nationalism—the struggle of Ireland against England—should be left unfought, while men engaged in another battle, a class struggle, in which Irishmen should be pitted against Irishmen. He thought that in such a battle very horrible things would be done, that fierce passions would be let loose, that mutual distrust and hate would separate Irishmen from each other in such a way that a whole generation

would have to pass before union would be possible again.

He had, ever since he heard of the meeting at Cuslough, been conscious of these doubts and fears. But he had put them behind him ; had locked them in at the back of his mind. Now the Dean had let them all loose. Stephen was forced to face them and deal with them. He was worried and uncomfortable.

CHAPTER XII

IT was whispered in the village that Eugene Hegarty was getting to be "queer." A man had lived in Dhulough once who had become very "queer" indeed. In the end he had threatened his wife with a carving-knife, had even tried to cut her throat. The woman had screamed aloud. Neighbours had come to her rescue. The police had taken the man and put him into the lunatic asylum. In the earlier stages of his malady this man had shunned human companionship, had taken long, solitary walks, had showed himself wholly uninterested in local affairs. The symptoms were manifest in Eugene Hegarty. The inference, to most men, was obvious and sure. The village people whispered it. Dean Ponsonby hinted and nodded. Mr. Manders spoke of Mrs. Hegarty as a woman greatly to be pitied.

Stephen thought he knew better. Eugene Hegarty was not mad nor likely to go mad. But it was undeniable that he was becoming further and further separated from the people around him. He was living a very lonely life. Stephen's intercourse with him had not been constant or close, nor had it been very fruitful. Partly the fault was Stephen's, partly Hegarty's, who was reserved and shy. But such as it was the intercourse had left an impression on Stephen. He felt that the clergyman was one who would judge the problems

of life by a standard not conventional; measure things otherwise than by the foot-rule of expediency.

In his perplexity he felt a desire to talk to Eugene Hegarty. He walked over to the rectory. The appearance of the maid who opened the door to him was surprising. No longer sluttish and barefooted, she was excessively, apparently uncomfortably, trim and neat. She had been decked, washed, combed for an occasion. He was shown into the drawing-room, and realised at once that he was to share in a festivity. The room, like the maid, was decked and washed. Mats and antimacassars were clean and stiff. The large oval table in the centre of the room shone excessively. Even the covers of the volumes containing the works of great British poets which lay on the table had been polished till the gilt lettering on their backs was very bright. In the middle of the table, under a glass shade, stood a curious, branched ornament with white satin flowers attached to its extremities. Originally it had formed part of Mrs. Hegarty's wedding-cake. The table itself was supported by a single leg, a sort of thick stem which spread itself a few inches above the floor into four carved knobby roots.

At this table sat Mrs. Hegarty and Mr. Manders side by side. The British poets, which usually lay at exactly equal distances from each other on white mats, were swept from their regular ranks and jostled each other, Cowper having even thrust a corner of his gilt cover into the middle of Pope's *Moral Essays*. The wedding-cake ornament was pushed out of its proper place in the centre of the polished ellipse. In front of Mrs. Hegarty lay a small book, open. It was not one of the British poets but a treatise on palmistry, a science just then beginning to attract the attention of women

who had nothing particular to do. Beside the book, flat and supine on the table, lay Mr. Manders' two shapely, brown hands.

"Oh, Mr. Butler, I am so glad to see you. Do please come and show me your hands. I am dreadfully puzzled. Mr. Manders has no line of life at all, and yet you know he's quite alive."

Mr. Manders, standing behind his hostess, winked at Stephen. It is possible to wink in an extremely vulgar manner, as the comedian in a comic opera winks when taking the audience into his confidence over a dubious joke. It is possible also to wink in such a way as to suggest self-satisfied delight in some stratagem successfully accomplished. In such a way do Prime Ministers wink at their private secretaries when they promise the English people a bill which will finally settle the Irish difficulty. There is also a friendly and wholly delightful wink which invites the recipient to come and take part in some very amusing game of make-believe. It was with a wink of this kind that Mr. Manders greeted Stephen. He was enjoying himself very much with pretty Mrs. Hegarty, and enjoying himself so innocently that he welcomed a friend to a share of the fun.

"It's Mrs. Hegarty's birthday to-day," he said, "and Mr. Hegarty has given her a book on the black art because he thinks she spends too much of her time reading the Bible."

"Do be quiet," said the lady delightedly. "You know that Eugene wouldn't give me such a thing for the world."

"Mr. Hegarty has gone away," went on Mr. Manders, "because we found out that he was going to be an archbishop and afterwards start a public-house. It

was all down in the lines of his hands. And when we found it out, he couldn't deny that it was very likely to come true."

Mrs. Hegarty had firm hold of Stephen's right hand. She spread it out with gentle force.

"Now, Mr. Manders," she said, "you find the map at the beginning of the book. Do please be serious. Here's a cross—no, a star, in the middle of the mountain of the moon. Isn't this the mountain of the moon? Let me look."

She leaned over Mr. Manders' shoulder, giggling with joy. Life in Dhulough rectory was very dull for Mrs. Hegarty. She was a woman fitted to shine at social gatherings in fashionable places. She would have cheered with unfailing smiles the young man who pours cream into the teacup with the remark "Say when," and goes on pouring after the victim of his attentions has said "thanks," or "now," or "no more, please." She would have always appreciated the subtle compliment which the same young man pays afterwards with the sugar-bowl in his hand: "Surely *you* don't require sweetening?" Or his later quotation from *Hamlet* on the occasion of offering a chocolate-cream: "Sweets to the sweet." To Dhulough rectory there never came any young men with engaging manners and polished wit. Mr. Manders was past the first blush of his youth. His hair was touched with grey and, on one part of his head, thin. But he had a merry eye and a very pleasant smile. Stephen Butler, almost her only other visitor, was young, but he was very stiff. It was hard to get any fun out of him. She preferred Mr. Manders in spite of his failing hair, but she never gave up hope of making something out of Stephen.

"It is the mountain of the moon," she said. "Now

please look on and see what the star means. I know it means something. You'll find it on the last page but two."

Mr. Manders carried off the book. Standing near the window he began solemnly—

"A cross on the mountain of the moon means marriage to a dark-haired lady of title who——"

"There," said Mrs. Hegarty, "'a dark-haired lady of title,' and you are dark yourself! Do you like dark hair, Mr. Butler? And a title too! How lovely!"

"Wait a minute," said Mr. Manders; "'who will take to drink in middle-life and try to poison her husband by giving him deadly nightshade in his coffee at breakfast.'"

"Oh, I am so sorry," said Mrs. Hegarty.

Mr. Manders winked at Stephen again. This time Mrs. Hegarty caught him in the act.

"Oh!" she cried, "you're making it all up as you go along. I know that's not in the book. Give it to me till I see. Give it me at once."

She made a dart across the room. Mr. Manders with amazing activity rushed round the table waving the book derisively. She pursued him, catching at the table as she swept round it, so that it rocked on its single leg and shed two of the British poets on to the floor. Mr. Manders in his efforts to escape set a heavy foot upon Dryden, cracking his back. Mrs. Hegarty stopped, panting.

"Please catch him, Mr. Butler. You stand there and I'll chase him round to you."

Mr. Manders winked again. Stephen stood helpless, growing hot and red. He could not bring himself to pursue Mr. Manders round a shiny oval table, across a green carpet with a floral pattern on it while two

British poets waited to trip him. He knew quite well what he ought to do. He ought to catch Mr. Manders by the arm, hold him with simulated effort until Mrs. Hegarty's hands were almost on him and then, after a vehement convulsion, let him go again. He ought to join in the pursuit, fall perhaps, certainly sweep away more British poets. He ought to keep the game up till Mrs. Hegarty's hair began to come down and her beautiful eyes danced yet more merrily with delighted excitement. But he could not bring himself to do these things. He knew that he was a prig, a starched, superior person, the most objectionable kind of man there is, one with too much dignity to join in the games of a child. But there was no use arguing with himself. He couldn't do it.

"Well," said Mr. Manders, "as it's her birthday we ought to give her back her book. What do you think, Butler?"

"Do," said Stephen. "I'm dying to hear the rest of my fortune. You'll go on reading my hand, won't you, Mrs. Hegarty?"

He owed it to her. He couldn't chase Mr. Manders. He stepped warily among the fallen poets; but he did his best to be agreeable, to redeem his character. He held out both hands—

"Please go on, Mrs. Hegarty."

"You believe in it, don't you, Mr. Butler? I'm sure Mr. Manders doesn't, though he pretends he does. But you do really, don't you? If you do, I'll go on; but I won't have my book laughed at. All sorts of very clever people believe in it. The gipsies, you know, tell people wonderful things, and I want to be like that."

Mr. Hegarty entered the room. Stephen grasped at his opportunity.

"I ought to have told you before," he said, "that I want to speak to Mr. Hegarty this afternoon on a matter of business—particular business, rather important business."

Mrs. Hegarty gaped with astonishment. It was impossible to imagine that any one could transact business, important business, with her husband.

"I am sorry," she said, "that we have kept you. I didn't know. My husband was in the study all the time, weren't you, dear? I could easily have sent for him."

"Oh, it was my own fault," said Stephen. "I forgot all about the business till I saw him. The palmistry was so fascinating, you know, and I was—I was enjoying myself."

Mrs. Hegarty smiled responsively. She quite believed that Stephen had been enjoying himself. She had been enjoying herself, and Mr. Manders had, quite plainly, been enjoying himself. There was nothing strange in the supposition that what amused them amused Stephen.

"Well now," she said, "be off, the two of you, and do your business, whatever it is, and come back again. We'll read up the book while you're away, and tell you all about yourself and your fortune afterwards."

Mr. Hegarty led the way into the little study and offered Stephen a chair. Then he sat down himself and looked at his visitor. He shared his wife's astonishment at the idea of any one wanting to do important business with him. Stephen sat silent, puzzled. In fact he had no business of any kind to do with Mr. Hegarty. He had spoken unadvisedly in the drawing-room, feeling at the moment nothing but a strong desire to escape, at any price, from the necessity of

having his fortune told by Mrs. Hegarty and Mr. Manders. Now, face to face with the expectant Mr. Hegarty without any definite business to talk about, he began to suffer for his rash words. Thus are men punished for the pleasures they avoid in life. A duty can be shirked on any excuse. The flimsiest lie will serve him who runs away from an obligation painful to fulfil. No one is brought to book for such excuses, or obliged to daub over his assertions with putty of truth. All the world understands the excuses and lies for what they are, and every one is patient with the liar. But the man who tries to escape his pleasures must make his position good. The excuse of illness will not serve him who wants to avoid a tea-party unless he can display to inquirers a visibly spotted skin. It is impossible to flee from the beautiful eyes of a lady palmist on the plea of serious business without producing afterwards a schedule of accounts, a lease, or some such document.

Mr. Hegarty sat patient, mildly expectant, looking at Stephen. He wanted to help the young man to the point if he could, but being unable to form the vaguest guess about what the business might be, he failed to do anything effective.

"Well?" he said at last.

"Would you mind if I smoked?"

"Not in the least. Please smoke."

"It's a habit with me, and I talk much more comfortably with a pipe in my mouth. But are you sure your wife won't object to the smell?"

"Oh, dear, no. The fact is she never comes into this room. And in any case she doesn't mind. Mr. Manders often smokes in the drawing-room."

Stephen slowly filled his pipe. He made up his

mind to tell Mr. Hegarty about the lecture which the Dean had given him. He struck a match, and held it to the bowl. He drew several whiffs of smoke and looked round him. He had never been in Mr. Hegarty's study before. He noted the bareness of the room, the scanty rows of books, the tattered patch of carpet, the ink-spotted writing-table with the iron cross upon it. His eyes rested on the iron cross, and the feeling came upon him that the man who dwelt with this bare, rigid symbol of suffering for a companion might have some word to say, some help to give. He saw the worn kneeling-mat and the picture above it, noted the stiff stupidity of the sheep among the thorns, and the tender face of the Shepherd who bent over it. Before this picture Eugene Hegarty prayed. Stephen remembered the unaccountable wave of emotion which had swept over him in the little church on that first, dark Sunday years before, when he had received the sacrament from Eugene Hegarty's hands. He realised suddenly that he could speak to the dull, unkempt man before him of great things; that he would find behind the peering, stupid-looking eyes understanding and sympathy; that no emotion could be so lofty as to lie beyond the range of one who looked daily on that stark iron cross, and knelt often before the Shepherd and His sheep. He felt, too, that speaking to Eugene Hegarty he would come to understand himself, would disentangle the troubled thoughts, strip bare to view the shrouded pains which vexed him.

"I had," he said, "a visit from Dean Ponsonby to-day. He had a long talk with me."

Mr. Hegarty stirred in his chair, a little vexed. He believed that he understood now what Stephen Butler's important business was. The Dean had sent the young

man there to remonstrate about some duty left undone, some affair neglected. There were many such duties and affairs which appealed strongly to the Dean about which Mr. Hegarty did not care at all. He felt a slight sense of resentment. It was not quite fair to send a layman, his own parishioner, to talk to him about such things. Almost at once the feeling passed. He waited for what was to come, humbly ready to endure rebuke.

"He gave me a great talking to," said Stephen, with a slight smile. "He told me very plainly what he thought of me. He said that I was engaged in stirring up strife and disloyalty; that I was false to my class and my religion. He told me that gentlemen and good men would hate and despise me. He made me feel snubbed, and"—Stephen's tone altered—"the worst of it is that I'm not sure he isn't right."

Eugene Hegarty's face lighted up suddenly. He became intensely, absorbingly interested in what he heard. This was the business then, the "important business." It was not an affair of money, of houses or lands. It was not a reproach of his own feeble, half-hearted ecclesiasticism. It was something of a kind real to Eugene Hegarty, the trouble of a human soul. This was of incomparably greater importance to him than the finances of the church or world.

"He was speaking, of course, of my politics," said Stephen, "of the party I belong to and the new way that things are going now."

"Ah, Mr. Butler, I knew long ago that trouble would come on you. I knew that I was going to bring trouble into your life when I gave you the paper I found in the old parish safe, the copy of your grandfather's oath. Are you sorry now that you ever saw it?"

"No. I am not sorry. I think I should be where I am to-day, on the side I am, doing the work I am doing, even if I had never seen the paper. I do not mean that it made no difference. It has made a difference. I have, so to speak, leaned back upon it when I doubted and wavered. It has been a strength to me, but I should have been where I am without it."

"Are you sorry now that you have gone in the way you have? Do you think you are wrong?"

"No. I have not been wrong. I have been right and am right. I am for Ireland, for my country, my own country—for her freedom, for her happiness, for her good. I am not wrong. Look at Ireland as she is to-day. Think of all——"

"Wait," said Mr. Hegarty. "I do not want you to argue with me about your politics, your hopes, or your plans. I have nothing to do with such things. I do not understand them. They only weary and perplex me. I wanted to know only one thing, and you have told me that. You believe that you are doing what is right. Your lips say so. And I have stronger testimony than your words. I have listened to the tone of your voice. I have seen the fire that is within you shining in your face, in your eyes. You believe what you say. You are trying to do right, not for any gain or praise that it will ever bring you, but just because it is right. I have still stronger witness even than your voice and your face. I have watched your life for years now, your daily life, the acts and words of times in which men forget to pose. I know that you believe in what you are doing."

"I do," said Stephen, softly, humbly. It was strange to him that he should be dominated by Eugene Hegarty, by the man who, of all men, seemed the feeblest. But

he made no effort to assert himself. He waited patient of guidance and leading.

"Then," said Eugene Hegarty, "be brave. Go on."

"I will go on. But for bravery—— It is very hard to be condemned and despised, but I dare say I can face that well enough though it is lonely, but——"

"You are lonely." Mr. Hegarty interrupted him. "I am sure of it. But has not every man who lived for a principle been lonely? It is not, I think, possible in this world to do simply what is right without being blamed and hated for it. If such a thing had been possible, would not Jesus Christ have accomplished it? He, of all men who ever lived, stood most plainly and simply for the highest good. And what was the record of His life? Read St. John's Gospel and you will see. A pleasant way enough at first—men and women listening to Him. Then, as they began to know Him and understand what He meant, a growth of distrust and opposition. Then anger and slander and hostility. Then the culmination of it all, when He stood with Pilate on the steps; the savage hatred of the priests, the mad blood-lust of the people. It is all traced out for us, step by step, from the day when the simple peasants praised the wine He made for them in Cana of Galilee, till—till—they passed by the cross He hung on wagging their heads at him. That was His story. Why should yours be different? Can it be otherwise for any of those to whom God has given a message to deliver to man, or a cause to live for? How can it be different for you unless you grow frightened and turn back?"

Stephen sat silent. His eyes left Eugene Hegarty's face and rested on the cross.

"I hope," he said, "I trust that I shall not go back."

Stephen's mind worked rapidly on what he had heard. He knew St. John's Gospel, believed that he knew it well, but he had never understood it before, or seen in it what he saw now. He went back over the familiar chapters, many of them learned by heart in childhood and not forgotten. Light broke on him. He saw the Saviour afresh, saw Him now, not as a remote Deity, shrouded in sanctity, but as a man, a man with a principle in life, with a truth to proclaim, a cause to labour for. He saw the pastoral beginning of the life, all sunshine, kindness, gentle hope; the feasting with the peasant people in Cana, the talking to the woman at the well. He saw the beginnings of misunderstanding, doubt, offence, and saw that they were inevitable because Jesus lived for truth and goodness. He traced, remembering incidents and whole chapters, the first hostilities, the growing dislike, the darkening hate. He realised the passionate longing of the enemies for the blood of Him who still stood calmly for the truth. He understood afresh the furious shouts of priests and people when Pilate said "Behold the Man!" He could not draw his eyes away from the black cross upon the table. The cross was for him then, more than it had ever been before, a source of strength.

But he was not satisfied. Strength was not all he wanted, was not what he chiefly wanted. He was no weakling, no coward. He was not afraid of standing alone. Yet he had admitted to himself, and had said to Eugene Hegarty, that he felt lonely. He knew now more clearly than when he began to talk what it was he wanted. It was not an assurance of Divine companionship on a road known to be right. It was not further conviction that the road had been right so far as he had travelled it. It was guidance now at a

critical point, at a parting of ways, at a crossing where the signposts were broken and illegible. Very confusedly, with many repetitions and much stumbling, he explained what was in his mind. Mr. Hegarty understood him with wonderful quickness. Some such problem, different in its details but essentially the same, must have been familiar to him.

"I myself," he said, "have never found it very difficult to do what was right once I knew it. I have often been sorely puzzled to decide what was right. That is how you feel."

Stephen nodded.

Eugene Hegarty began to speak slowly in single, short sentences, with long breaks and silences between them.

"You must not do things which are plainly wrong.

"You must not go such ways as necessitate your doing wrong.

"I do not understand your politics or the ways of them, but you must do only what is right.

"The windings of the ways of the world are many and confusing, but right is right and wrong is wrong. A lie, for instance, is a lie, in public life or private.

"The right and wrong of single, simple acts is clear, not dubious. You must not reason about such right and wrong.

"A kind of life or a policy which necessitates doing single wrong things cannot itself be right."

Stephen rose at last, after a longer pause than usual, and held out his hand.

"I cannot thank you," he said, "but you have done much for me."

At the door of the room he turned.

"I will ask you to pray for me."

"I do pray for you. I have done so ever since I knew you. Is it not the chief part of my duty to pray for you? It is also my delight. You need not fear that I shall forget you."

Eugene Hegarty did not follow his visitor from the room. He turned to his familiar place; knelt as he had knelt a thousand times; saw the Good Shepherd and the poor lost sheep in the brambles; prayed.

Stephen, passing the drawing-room door, heard voices and laughter. Mrs. Hegarty and Mr. Manders were merry. He walked softly, hoping to escape them, but they heard him.

"That you, Butler? Come along. We've got your fortune ready for you."

The door opened, and Mr. Manders caught him by the arm. Mrs. Hegarty's voice reached him—

"What a time you were about your tiresome old business, and I'm sure it was only Dogherty's cow grazing in the churchyard. I always said it was horrid to let it. But do come in."

"I was thinking of going home," said Stephen.

"Nonsense," said Mr. Manders. "Mrs. Hegarty has got a beautiful cake waiting for you, her birthday cake. I'm trying to guess whether she is twenty-two or twenty-three or twenty-four, and she won't tell me when I'm right."

Stephen was led in. They gave him pieces of birthday cake which had hard sugar on the top and sweets with almonds in them stuck on the sugar. They told his fortune for him, promising a beautiful bride, a narrow escape, a serious illness, and at last the fulfilment of his heart's desire.

CHAPTER XIII

THE historian who undertakes the task of writing the history of Ireland during the nineteenth century will have need of a natural fondness for oratory to help him through his task. He will, of course, like all historians, have to read State papers, the letters of eminent men, and quite a number of biographies. But more than any other historian, he will be obliged to read through speeches. We have, all of us, a taste for making speeches, and being a people with a sense of fair play, we all listen to each other's speeches; knowing that the men who speak to-day will be listening to us to-morrow. As our cheers encourage them, so in due time will their cheers hearten us up to fine flights and great words. There have, of course, been a few people prominent in Irish history who have not made speeches at all; and there have been others who meant a good deal of what they said. It has been the misfortune of the first class to have had their reputations drenched into a condition of soddenness by the oratory of their admirers since they departed from the scene of action. The second class have generally said so much more than they meant that their plans, intentions, policy—whatever they meant to start with—have been lost to sight amid the whirling flights of words. For the most part the Englishmen who govern our country have allowed us to talk as much and as loud as we liked. Occasionally they have interfered with the

delivery of some particular speech. They have even been known to shut a speaker up in gaol for a week or two. They have done this in pure kindness of heart. Realising that we are not happy without explosive rhetoric, they have, by unreasonably imprisoning a stray orator, given the rest of the community a fine new substance of a most inflammatory kind, out of which to fashion more orations. We ought to be grateful to them. Yet among the resolutions, which in this era of local self-government are passed every hour, there has not been one in which any Chief Secretary has been thanked for imprisoning a Member of Parliament.

Only once during the century have our speeches gone near accomplishing anything, and that was when the speakers were exploited in a curious way by a man who himself disliked speaking. The new Parliamentary leader to whom Stephen Butler attached himself, hit upon the brilliant idea of driving Englishmen mad by making speeches continuously for days and nights at a time. The idea was not wholly original. It was an adaptation to modern times of the policy of Moses. When that great lawgiver set to work to deliver the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, he devised the plan of inflicting plagues of locusts, frogs, and flies upon the people of Egypt. No one objects to a few flies or a reasonable number of frogs. But when the frogs, for instance, become so numerous that you can't get out of bed without stepping on one, or bake a loaf of bread without finding a reptile in your dough, the thing becomes serious. Just in the same way no Englishman objects in the least to a considerable number of Irishmen making speeches in his Parliament. When there is no very urgent business on hand, an Irish member's speech is rather agreeable than

otherwise, just as a fly on a window-pane adds by its buzzing a pleasant sense of drowsiness to a summer afternoon. But a plague of flies—flies in such numbers as to harass men in their sport and work—is quite a different matter. It became a serious question with the Egyptians whether it would not be better to let the Israelites go off to Sinai and get such laws as they could for themselves, rather than tolerate at Memphis or Thebes a leader who could afflict the whole country with swarms of flies and locusts. The policy was not wholly successful. Moses was obliged at last to resort to sterner measures, to the actual slaughter of several Egyptians before his people escaped. But there is no doubt that the early plagues opened the eyes of Pharaoh to the existence of what must have been called the Hebrew question, in a way that no moderate number of flies, locusts, or frogs, however lively and plump, could ever have done.

The Irish leader had no command of flies, and he lived in days when bacilli were not recognised as a manageable force. He did what he could. He told his followers to make speeches in the House of Commons on every subject which came up. Just at first nobody quite understood what was happening. Statesmen are accustomed to a good deal of speaking, because the art of governing a country nowadays consists in getting things done quickly in between the speeches. But the Irish leader was determined to leave no spaces between the speeches of his followers; not the smallest chink should be available through which it should be possible to pass even a simple little bill for flogging soldiers. Englishmen, who are after all a more or less practical race, began to find an increasing difficulty in getting any business transacted on account

of the extraordinary number of speeches which poured upon them. Then they woke up to the fact that an insolent little knot of Irishmen actually intended to prevent business being done. The thing was absurd, impossible, ridiculous; just as the flies were for the first half-hour or so to the Egyptians. The English press printed weighty words about dignity and proper feeling and traditional respect for the greatest legislative assembly on earth. The Irishmen smiled delightedly. Then anger, real anger, with the strongest language on its lips, took the place of remonstrances. Statesmen raged furiously as they watched the locust swarm of speeches devouring the tender crops of legislation with which they hoped at the end of the session to stay the hungry stomachs of constituents.

Stephen Butler worked as hard as any of his fellow-members. He had sat through several sessions, during which Irish grievances were presented in a reasonable way. He had himself been listened to with courtesy and respect. He had enjoyed himself. But he had also realised that Englishmen had no more idea of allowing Ireland to govern herself constitutionally than Pharaoh had of allowing the Hebrews to keep their babies alive and stop making bricks. He felt that some measures must be adopted to force the English to consider the demands of Ireland. The plague of speeches plan seemed to him a hopeful one. He flung himself into the working of it with the greatest ardour. There was no subject on which he was not prepared to talk at length, and he would have proposed several amendments to every clause of the Apostle's Creed if the Government had wanted for any reason to embody that document in an Act of Parliament.

By degrees not only statesmen, Members of Parlia-

ment and politicians generally, but the public itself, the great British public, began to get excited and angry over the conduct of the Irish members. It is, as a rule, difficult to excite the British public. People often try to stir it up without succeeding very brilliantly. But when it is aroused it becomes exceedingly fierce. The Irish members, continuing their deluge of speeches, sometimes for twenty-four hours continuously, began to feel the effects of the anger they had aroused. Those of them who were privileged to go much into English society, who belonged to good clubs or dined at fashionable houses, were the first to feel uncomfortable.

Stephen Butler was lunching one day at his club. He had been up all the night before in the House of Commons, and at about eight o'clock in the morning had succeeded in outraging the decencies of public life so violently that he had been suspended. The surviving members of the party in power, with nerves stretched like fiddle-strings for want of sleep, felt they could stand him no more. The jaded Speaker made a spasmodic effort, named and suspended him. He returned, well pleased, to his rooms, turned into bed and slept for four hours the sleep of a just man who has done a good day's work at the cost of some personal inconvenience. Then he rose, splashed about in a cold bath, shaved, dressed carefully and repaired to his club hungry for the meal which was to take the place of both breakfast and luncheon.

Lord Daintree, who had carried out his plan of retiring to London till his tenants settled down again, came over to Stephen's table and sat down.

"They tell me," he said, "that you were the hero of an outrageous, or perhaps I ought to say a glorious, row in the House last night."

Stephen laughed. "I believe," he said, "it was our best performance so far."

"How long do you mean to go on? I ask merely out of curiosity. I'm not interested except as a spectator."

"Until by our continual talking we weary them. You remember the parable of the unjust judge? If these English people won't listen to reason, they must be made to act rightly by force."

"Let me see. It's an independent Irish Parliament you want, isn't it? The 1782 constitution revised and brought up to date?"

Stephen nodded. His mouth was full of food, and he felt no need of adding anything to Lord Daintree's lucid statement.

"Well, you won't get it. At least, I shall be very much surprised if you do. If you go on long enough, you'll goad the English people into disfranchising Ireland altogether and governing it like a crown colony."

Stephen swallowed hastily, and then drank half a glass of beer.

"I wish they would," he said. "We'd have the country up in arms then."

Lord Daintree smiled. He had not a high opinion of the fighting capacity of unorganised masses of people. In his day he had seen a good many riots in various cities.

"In the meanwhile," he said, "you are making yourselves extremely unpopular."

Stephen was at a pause in his meal. The waiter was bringing him apple tart and cream. He was free to make quite a long reply.

"The more unpopular we are in England the better

we are pleased. What we want is to have Irish opinion behind us, not the opinion of the respectable classes. In Ireland the respectable middle class is quite impotent and helpless. They are all cowards. Middle classes always are, you know, everywhere. I've heard you say that yourself. What we want is the goodwill of the extreme men—the hillsideers. They'll terrify the others into supporting us. And the only way to get them is to make ourselves very unpopular here in England."

"Quite so," said Lord Daintree. "I see that. I quite understand that unpopularity with the enemy is a useful asset to a general. But that wasn't exactly what I meant. You are getting beyond the stage of being unpopular in a general sort of newspaper way. You are beginning to get yourself personally disliked."

"Oh, I know that," said Stephen. "There are lots of men over at home who will hardly speak to me."

"I don't mean at home. The Irish gentry—well, the Irish gentry are the Irish gentry. Their outlook upon life is not highly philosophical. They take themselves and what they believe to be their principles so very seriously. I've met several of them who actually believed in what they called loyalty, just as if they lived in the seventeenth century. I shouldn't a bit wonder at their sacrificing themselves and their estates for the sake of some high-falutin' notion about preserving the integrity of the empire, just as if the empire was interested in looking after them. No, I didn't mean them. I don't suppose you mind them much."

"Well, I did mind about them; for that matter I do still, and just for the reason that you regard them as contemptible——"

"Not contemptible," said Lord Daintree. "Don't put violent words into my mouth. I'm not a politician, and strong language has no attraction for me. Don't let's call them contemptible. Let's say comic. Yes, comic is the word, as a lady would be nowadays who appeared at a garden-party in a crinoline. They are absurdly behind the times."

"Well, comic, then. I value their good opinion just because they are so comic and old-fashioned as to have principles. I have principles myself."

"Of course you have. And so have they. And so has every one in the world except me. But don't be angry with me about it. I'm a very feeble old man, and if righteous anger blazes at me I shrivel up. You'd be sorry to shrivel me, wouldn't you? Fancy, if I became a little heap of ashes at your feet and you had to call the waiter and say: 'Please sweep up Lord Daintree. I've shrivelled him.'"

Stephen laughed aloud. The joke was not a particularly good one, but he was easily moved to laughter, having eaten the apple tart and sent for cheese and a glass of port.

"The men in the club are getting angry with you," said Lord Daintree. "They don't like your way of flying in the face of the House of Commons. I shouldn't wonder if you got a hint to resign your membership."

"What the devil have my opinions got to do with my membership? This isn't supposed to be a political club."

"Oh, it's not your politics. They've known your politics for years and don't mind them. What they say is that you are bringing disgrace on the club."

"How?"

"Oh, getting named by the Speaker and kicking up rows."

"But——"

"Now don't argue with me. I'm not your equal. Besides, I really don't know what is considered to disgrace a club. I've been all my life trying to find out what the standard of morality is to which a gentleman tries to conform. For instance, I know a man who gets hopelessly drunk on public occasions, goes to sleep on sofas at balls and snores heavily. Nobody ever said he disgraced a club. I knew another man in a club I belonged to once who ran away with the wife of a fellow-member. There was a good deal of talk about the business, but nobody wanted to expel him except the fellow whose wife was taken from him. But about six months afterwards he got tired of the lady and sent her back to her husband. Then they held a general meeting and expelled him. Queer, wasn't it? As well as I recollect a lot of them wanted to expel the husband too for taking her back. You can't argue out these things. The moment you begin to try you get yourself bogged hopelessly. It's just the same with lying. Men fight shy of you if you tell a certain sort of lie persistently, and if you cheat at cards. But I've been all my life lying. It was my profession to lie. I was a diplomatist, you know. Nobody thinks a bit the worse of me. In fact I've got a jewel-case full of ribbons and stars and things given me as tokens of respect for my skill as a liar. And as for cheating—well, you're a politician yourself, so I needn't tell you anything about that."

"I don't cheat," said Stephen. He was much less inclined to laugh than he had been a few moments before. The suggestion of possible expulsion from his club vexed him. There came on him a return of the de-

pression from which he had suffered at Dhulough, when the Dean lectured him, and he realised for the first time that men of his own class were turning their backs on him.

"Of course you don't cheat," said Lord Daintree. "Haven't I said that Irish gentlemen, all of them except me, have principles."

"Then I'm a comic anachronism, a lady in a crinoline. It's a poor choice you give to a man who tries to preserve a little self-respect."

"Well, you know a man must put up with these little things. Lots of young fellows think I wear stays. It isn't true; but I never dream of getting angry. I'm sure a crinoline is no worse than stays. Besides, you know you really are a little out of date. It was all very well for your grandfather, but nationalism at this time of day—I don't mean merely Irish nationalism, but nationalism of every sort—it's—it's a sort of reversion to primitive conditions, like a man insisting on shaving with an oyster-shell instead of a razor."

Stephen sat silent. He felt that he was within a little of disliking Lord Daintree very much. And yet he did not dislike him. He would have been exceedingly sorry if anything happened to deprive him of the privilege of hearing from time to time the old gentleman's comments upon life. These conversations amused him, stimulated him, but they left him with a feeling of impotent irritation. But Lord Daintree had not finished with him.

"Don't worry about the men in the club," he went on. "Very likely it will all end in talk. And, anyway, it's all for the sake of old Ireland, you know. That ought to cheer you up. What does the opinion of the mere Sassenach matter, even if he won't let you eat your

lunch in the same room with him? But there's another matter. What about the Land League?"

"Well," said Stephen, sharply. He was on the defensive now in earnest. He did not like the subject of the Land League. Plaguering Englishmen is excellent sport. In the excitement of it a man may forget all about a host of unpleasant things. It was not kind of Lord Daintree to drag skeletons out of cupboards in this way.

"Oh, nothing much," said Lord Daintree. "I shouldn't wonder if they shot Manders any time now."

"What would they shoot Manders for? He's very popular."

"Personally, yes. Officially, no. They'd shoot him to intimidate me, I suppose. Not that it would intimidate me in the least. I like Manders very well. But I shouldn't repent of being a landlord because my agent died suddenly. Why should I?"

"Why do you say things like this to me?"

"Well, it may be foolish, but I thought perhaps you'd put in a good word for poor Manders. After all he's your friend, you know, as well as mine. Couldn't you arrange for them to demonstrate against Manders, have a sort of reconnaissance in force, miss him, you know, two or three times, often enough to show they really meant to hit him?"

"My God," said Stephen, "you are talking to me as if I were in league with murderers!"

"Don't talk about murder," said Lord Daintree. "There's not the slightest necessity to call that kind of shooting murder. I've seen the police shoot people in the streets of several cities, and nobody called it murder. You're so hasty, Butler. A minute ago you

wanted to make out that I called the Irish gentry contemptible. Now you think I'm accusing your friends of murder."

"My friends!" said Stephen. "Can't you understand——"

"Aren't they your friends?" said Lord Daintree, mildly surprised. "I apologise, of course. I'm sorry. I mentioned poor Manders at all. I'm sure you'd do anything for him you could. But, of course, if you can't, you can't."

CHAPTER XIV

LORD DAINTREE'S talk stirred again in Stephen the doubt and fear he felt about the Land League. Once before, when Dean Ponsonby lectured him, he had been obliged to face the question. But he had succeeded in putting it by again. Now it came on him more insistently and fiercely. The daily papers were beginning to report agrarian outrages in Ireland. One or two murders had startled society. But Stephen, absorbed in the excitement of Parliamentary life, had not allowed his mind to dwell on them. He did not wish to consider them. But now he found himself forced to, and to do so with Mr. Hegarty's simple teaching about right and wrong clear in his recollection.

He consulted, as he was bound to do, members of his own party about his difficulties. He got little help or guidance from them.

"It is impossible," one said, "for us to control the action of every local branch. Besides, it's not our business to help the English to govern the country. They've got police enough to help them. If they can't keep order themselves they had better let us try. We must break the power of the landlords, and put a stop to arbitrary evictions."

Another man, whom Stephen knew to be a sincere and devoted Nationalist, answered him differently.

"The whole business," he said, "is a means to an end. Your class, my dear Butler, is hopelessly and

devotedly loyal to England. The Protestant aristocracy stands between us and our rights as a nation. We can't win them over. Therefore, we've got to break their power, to destroy them as a force in the country. I don't care a snap of my fingers about the land agitation from any other point of view. As a matter of fact, I'd rather have the gentry on our side, and let them keep their estates. But if they won't join us they've got to go. Everything that stands between us and our independence has got to go."

Stephen sighed. The indictment of the gentry was perfectly true. They might have gone into the national movement and directed it. They preferred to hold on to the skirts of English statesmen. The extinction of their power was inevitable. But that did not make the means by which it was being brought about any pleasanter to contemplate.

Another spoke in a third way.

"We can't stop the thing now, even if we wanted to. If we tried we should lose our influence with the people, and ours is the only restraining force. Without the little control we are able to exercise, things would go from bad to worse. There would be anarchy, actual anarchy, in the country if we withdrew from the movement now. Besides, how can we? The Government is threatening us with all sorts of pains and penalties, with the suspension of ordinary law. I believe they're going to put the country under a set of pretty nearly irresponsible police magistrates. If we turn back now, everybody will say we simply funked the threatened coercion. We should be utterly discredited, both here and in Ireland. No, I don't like outrage and murder any more than you do, Mr. Butler. I candidly confess that if I had known what this business was going to

develop into, I'd have kept out of it. But now I'm in it, I'm going on, right through to the end. We'll let the English see which is stronger, their law or the will of the Irish people."

One other answer Stephen got—a cynical answer it seemed to him. It was given him by an able man whose intellectual power had often fascinated him, but of whom he had always felt a certain distrust.

"You know the old proverb, Mr. Butler, about the impossibility of making omelettes without breaking eggs? Apply it."

"What do you mean?" asked Stephen.

"Just what I say. You can't have a revolution without a little—what shall I call it?—unpleasantness. In my opinion we're getting off extremely cheap. I understand that you're an extreme man, Mr. Butler. You wouldn't be content with a gas-and-water vestry in Dublin?"

"Certainly not. I want an independent parliament for Ireland; something analogous to Grattan's Parliament."

"And are you fool enough to think the English will ever give us that? They'd be bigger asses than I take them for if they did. Why, man, an independent Ireland would smash up their empire in five years. The Unionists are quite right about that. No sane Englishman will ever agree to such a thing voluntarily. We've got to run a revolution. Well, we're doing it on the most economical lines possible; economical, that is to say, in the kind of unpleasantness you complain of. Why, if we went to work along Wolfe Tone's lines, or the Fenians', we should deluge the country in blood. Whereas the way we're doing the thing—what's an odd landlord here or there? Isn't it better to shoot a

couple of dozen of them down in the country than to be hanging all sorts of really decent people on the lamp-posts of the towns the way the French did?"

"I don't believe for a moment," said Stephen, "that you mean half you say. If I thought you did, I'd never speak to you again."

"Ah, that's just because you won't think straight. You cherish illusions. Now, I got rid of my illusions years ago."

"I cherish a belief," said Stephen, "since you force me to put it into words, that there's a difference between a soldier killing his enemy on a battlefield and an assassin lurking behind a wall for the life of an unsuspecting neighbour."

"From the point of view of the man who gets killed there doesn't seem to me to be any difference at all. If I had to choose myself I think I'd rather perish by the hand of the assassin. I should get a lot more sympathy and have nice things written about me in the newspapers. The mere soldier——"

"I don't think the present condition of things in Ireland is a good subject for cynical jokes."

"All right. I won't joke. I'll give you a bit of advice straight out of Shakespeare, so it's sure to be good. 'These things must not be thought of in this manner. So they will make us mad.' They'd make me mad if I went over to Ireland and watched them going on. What you ought to do is to stay here with us. Let yourself be absorbed in the parliamentary struggle. You'll feel the way we're being bullied and brow-beaten. Flame like the rest of us, and there won't be room in your mind for the very ugly considerations that are preying on it now."

"I knew," said Stephen with real pleasure, "that you did not mean what you said just now."

"Oh, yes, I did. That was the true philosophy of the affair. Only, thank God, our minds are so constituted that we can't keep our attention fixed on pure philosophy. For the most part we see the skirts and draperies of Truth, her frills and furbelows, and we're content. Now and again we catch a glimpse of the goddess herself, naked. Then if we're wise men we look the other way, and steal out of sight before we're caught. If we don't, our own thoughts tear us to bits like the hounds in the old myth. By the way, do you read Shelley?"

"Yes," said Stephen, "occasionally. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. Only if you didn't read Shelley you might have given me credit for originality. I should like you to think that I hit upon that thought about Actæon and his dogs myself. But of course I didn't. For the matter of that Shelley didn't either. The idea was always there in the story for anybody to pick out who wanted it. I dare say lots of other fellows put it into words before Shelley, only they didn't write it down."

Walking down Piccadilly one morning Stephen met Lord Daintree, and received an invitation to dinner.

"I shall be all by myself," said the old man. "My son has some engagement this evening. He generally has. I shall be really grateful if you will give me your company. I want to hear the latest news about Irish politics."

After dinner he heard it. Stephen told him of the progress of the League, of the outrages that were occurring in the country, of the inability or unwillingness of the politicians to interfere.

"I'm very well out of that business," said Lord Daintree. "It's all very fine for Manders. He's a sporting man, and likes shooting. I don't. How long do you suppose it will go on?"

"God knows!" said Stephen hopelessly.

"It's annoying to me—very annoying. I don't want to live in London. I have had enough of cities in my day. I want peace in my old age, monotonous days and long evenings. I should like to live out the rest of my time at home. However, if I can't, I can't. What do these fellows want? What do they expect?"

"Oh, you know well enough what they want. Fixity of tenure, fair rent, and the rest of it; perfectly reasonable demands, if only they were made in a proper way. But it's terrible to see——"

"Don't harrow my feelings. Spare me the details. Let's stick to broad principles. I suppose they are reasonable demands. But how the deuce is one to yield to them? You may. You're a bachelor with no expensive tastes. But what about me? How can I reduce my rents when I'm put to the pin of my collar to live at present?"

The wine was excellent, and Stephen was smoking an expensive cigar handed to him by a well-trained servant. He recollected the condition of some of Lord Daintree's tenants, men who owed rent to their landlord and money to Heverin. He sighed.

"And there are other fellows worse off than I am, men with mortgage interests to pay, or heavy charges. How can we reduce our rents? But, of course, our position is plain enough. We've got to fight the matter out to the end. I dare say we'll be beaten; but we'll hang on as long as we can, and fight our corner. But what about you, Butler? Do you know that you are

an extremely interesting person just at present? You've got yourself into such an uncommonly queer place. I suppose you are still a Nationalist?"

"Yes. I'm as convinced as ever I was that Ireland——"

"Quite so," said Lord Daintree. "I understand. Your grandfather said it all to my father about a hundred years ago. But you're not a Land Leaguer?"

Stephen hesitated.

"No," he said at last, "I'm not. I admit the justice of most of what the tenants want, but I can't take part in the effort they're making to get it."

"That's just what I expected you to say. Now tell me this. Is there any one else in Ireland in your position?"

"Yes. I'm sure there are plenty of men. There must be."

"Come, now, how many men can you actually count on who share your views?"

Stephen laughed.

"One," he said; "just exactly one. And he's a worn-out old Fenian who spent several years in gaol."

"Ah! and you and he are going to turn back the battle from the gate. Is that the idea? You and he, the two of you, are to stay the progress of the League and then force the British Government to give Ireland her independence. Of course, I'm a cynical old beast to be talking to you like this. You Butlers have always had a touch of the idealist in you. Your grandfather wouldn't take the title they offered him. Your father gave up what must have been a pleasant enough kind of life and came back to Ireland to die of the famine fever. And what good did they do? Ireland is no better off because they were fools—I don't use

the word in any offensive way, but simply as the world uses it—and you're a great deal worse off. Now why should you be a fool too? You can't do any good. You admit yourself that you're perfectly helpless. Why not throw the whole business up? Let Manders and Heverin shoot at each other, and the devil take the one of them who screws least money out of the poor brutes of tenants. You leave it to them to settle. Take a trip abroad for a year or two, and then come back and marry a rich wife. You have your life before you. Get some good out of it."

"I can't," said Stephen.

"Why?"

"I can't tell you. I can't explain."

"You won't explain," said Lord Daintree, "because you think I wouldn't understand or would laugh. But I think I do understand. I've met men like you occasionally. I've met most sorts of men in my day, and your sort among the rest, but very few of them. You have an idea of duty and you won't go against it. You have at the back of your mind a thing you call principle, and you won't be false to it. Isn't that so?"

"It isn't that I won't," said Stephen. "I can't. If I went off to enjoy myself now and left Ireland I should be miserable, because I should despise myself. I couldn't help despising myself."

"Well, you're a fool then, like your father before you and your grandfather before him. But I'll give you this much credit. If there were more fools of your kind the world would be a better place than it is. You would be a hero then, and not a fool. But the world is filled with men like me. We are the immense majority, and we rule the world. We have the driving force, the thing that makes mankind do things, with us, and that

is selfishness. Therefore you are a fool, and not a hero. At bottom a fool and a hero are the same kind of man. It's accident which determines which of the two a man of your temperament is to be. If, as happens once in a hundred years, his folly and the general selfishness make in the same direction, then he takes men along with a rush. They call him a hero, and make songs about him. But generally selfishness and principle pull opposite ways. Then the man of principle isn't a hero but a fool. At present you can't be a hero. Men of my class are selfish and want to keep their land. Men of the other class are also selfish, and want to get the land. We won't go your way, nor will the Land League. The result is that you'll be left staring by yourself—a fool. Take my advice and don't be a fool. It's not pleasant."

Stephen pondered the advice as he had pondered that given him by the Member of Parliament. He didn't take either the one or the other.

CHAPTER XV

FATHER STAUNTON sat in his study one day in February. A volume of his Cyprian lay open before him, but he was not reading. The difficulties which beset the Carthaginian Church were not so pressing just then as those of the Church in Dhulough. Even the fine white vellum of the binding of the volume failed to delight Father Staunton, though the fingers of the hand which propped the book on the table before him moved along the deep dints of the tooling. He was perplexed and worried. Things were happening in his parish which he did not like. Like many of the French ecclesiastics whom he had known as a young man, Father Staunton had a distrust of modern democratic ideas. Partly because he himself belonged to an old and honourable family, and partly because he was a man of considerable learning and high culture, his sympathy was with the aristocracy, even where, as in Ireland, the aristocracy is for the most part Protestant. His natural dislike of agrarian agitation deepened into definite hostility as he watched the developments of the Land League and its methods of work.

One of the shopkeepers in the village of Cuslough, a widow, came to him one day with tears in her eyes to tell him that her business was ruined. No one entered her shop or would buy from her. She had sold bread to a man who was obnoxious to the League, and now

she herself was made to share his punishment. Ruin, and afterwards starvation or the workhouse, faced her and her children. Two days afterwards he heard that the cattle on a farm near Cuslough had been brutally maimed and some of them killed. On this very morning news had been brought him that Mr. Manders, the agent, had been shot at as he drove home after sunset.

Father Staunton thought of these and other things and could not read his Cyprian. His face was drawn and marked with heavy lines. His right hand fidgeted nervously, tremulously, with some papers which lay beside his book. He looked an old, a very old man; like one in whose life the final break had come.

There came a brisk tap at the door and Father O'Sullivan entered. He said something about a meeting of the League which was to be held in Dhulough village on the following Sunday evening, and asked Father Staunton to give his permission to a priest from a neighbouring parish to speak at it. He made his request as if the granting of permission were a mere matter of form, as if it were certain to be granted.

"I am not sure," said Father Staunton, "that I shall give the permission. I do not care for these Land League meetings."

Father O'Sullivan looked at him with astonishment.

"Surely," he said, "you will not refuse. He has spoken here several times before. It would be a very strong step to forbid him to speak again."

"I think I will refuse. I don't like the way the League is going on."

"But all the priests, or almost all, are in favour of it, and the people are all in it. The people will be very disappointed. They will be very angry."

The words were innocent enough, but there was a hint of a threat in the way Father O'Sullivan spoke them. He had, indeed, no very great respect for Father Staunton. He regarded the old priest as a feeble, worn-out man. He was mistaken. There was behind Father Staunton's gentleness and habitual indecision a capacity for making up his mind on occasion.

"I do forbid him," he said. "I refuse to give him leave to speak at the meeting, and, what is more, I shall warn the people from the altar next Sunday against the Land League."

"Why?"

"It is an immoral conspiracy. Who cut the tails off Cassidy's bullocks last week? The Land League. Who's ruining the widow Dever's little shop and driving her to the workhouse? The Land League? Who had a shot at Mr. Manders last night? I'm a priest of the Catholic Church, and I'll give no countenance to devilish cruelty and murder."

"You are mistaken, Father; indeed, you are mistaken. The League does not encourage such outrages. They are not our work. Do you think I would be chairman of meetings where such things are planned?"

"Your League doesn't stop them, and it might. It doesn't discourage them. It doesn't denounce them. Why not?"

"But we are not policemen. Surely the police ought to do their own work without coming to us to help them. You cannot expect us to patrol the country."

Father Staunton looked at his curate long and searchingly; but Father O'Sullivan met his gaze without flinching. It was the old man's eyes, and not his, which dropped at the end of their encounter. Father O'Sullivan had done nothing of which he was ashamed,

was doing nothing which his conscience forbade. And he, too, was a priest of the Church, an upholder of Catholic morality, of the teaching of Jesus Christ. Father Staunton could not but believe that the man before him was honest.

"You are teaching the people," he said, "to repudiate their just and lawful debts; to refuse to pay what they owe. Is that in accordance with the teaching of the church?"

Hitherto Father O'Sullivan had spoken as a man on his defence. He had been calm and respectful in his manner. He had shown no trace of excitement. Now, suddenly, there came bright patches of red on his cheeks. His eyes opened wide so that it was possible to see a rim of white all round the pupils. A pulse throbbed visibly in his temples. He seemed to be struggling to give expression to strong feeling. Beads of sweat broke out on his forehead. Then he spoke.

"Lawful debts! Yes, lawful according to iniquitous laws of man's making which allow the rich to rob the poor. But just! How can you call them just debts? Is it justice to take the food out of the mouths of hundreds of women and children that one man may live in luxury? Is it justice to burn the roofs off the poor mud-cabins that shelter the people, because they can't pay what is demanded of them? Oh, you mustn't talk of justice. Sure, you know—aren't you a good man, and don't we all know that you have the mercy of God in your heart and His love for the poor?—you know that the people can't pay. It isn't that they won't; they can't. Wasn't the harvest last year the worst that was known since the famine? And never a penny of their rents would the landlords forego. Ah! don't talk of justice."

Father O'Sullivan came close beside the table ; he knelt down, pushed away the Cyprian, and took Father Staunton's hands in his.

"Think, Father," he said. "Think of last December, at the blessed Christmas time, when they were getting ready the crib for the Son of Mary to lie in the chapel. They came with the police to the people's houses, and they broke the doors off them, and dragged all the sticks of furniture out on to the roadside and the rain coming down on them. The women were gathering the little children under their shawls—all the shelter that was left for them in the cruel, wide world. The men stood there, stupid with misery, while the thatch of the roofs was burnt before their eyes. Think of it. God in heaven! Can a man think of it and not burn with rage?"

Father Staunton sat silent. He knew that the description his curate gave was true. He realised with awful plainness the scenes. He had heard the women's wailing. He had seen the dumb despair in the men's faces. He wavered. For a moment it seemed to him, as it seemed to Father O'Sullivan, that any means were justifiable which would put an end to such things. Then he remembered more. He remembered faces, base, cruel faces, in which there was not dumb despair but furtive hate, and bitter, cowardly cruelty. He saw, in imagination, men, like fiends, crawling through the darkness with knives in their hands to cut and mangle the beasts which stood patient in the bare fields. He had vision of others, heartened for awful iniquity with draughts of whisky, lurking behind walls with loaded guns that they might take human life. Father O'Sullivan might argue and excuse himself, might disclaim the League's responsibility for such deeds ; but they

followed the League's teaching, as rain followed the gathering of clouds in the south. He remembered the widow and her shop. She also was ruined. Her children too were starving. It was the League, not the landlord, which was cruel to her.

"I know well what you mean," he said. He rose slowly from his chair and drew away his hands from the young man's grasp. "Believe me, I have felt it. It is true that I have been a selfish old man, that I have cared too much for my own comfort and too little for my people. Yet I have not been so selfish that I have not sometimes felt for them. I know well that they have suffered. But I say this to you solemnly now. There is something worse than suffering wrong. There is a world beyond this one where they who suffer wrong are recompensed. A man may suffer wrong and be saved. But what is to be said of those who of their own set purpose *do* wrong?"

Father O'Sullivan also rose. The colour had gone from his cheeks. Even his lips were almost white. The look of fierce determination which had long before attracted the wonder of Stephen Butler took the place of excitement on his face.

"May God forget me in my last hour," he said, "if I stand by with folded hands and see my people suffer wrong; if I drug them with talk of the joys of paradise so that the wicked may make a prey of them now without fear of vengeance."

"Take care," said Father Staunton, "lest you deny the faith."

"I shall take care that I am not false to God's truth and God's justice."

The curate left the room.

Father Staunton went over to the chair before the

table and sat down again. He pulled the volume of Cyprian over towards him, closed it, and stroked the smooth sides of the book softly with one hand. The afternoon light began to fail. Clouds gathered from the south-west—heavy, black clouds—and they obscured the twilight which still lingered in the west. The fire glowed in the grate, but there were no flames among the sods of turf. The priest sat almost in the dark.

It seemed to him that Father O'Sullivan had defied him, had made light of his authority, had treated his opinions with contempt. He was angry. Of late years Father Staunton had very rarely been angry with any one. Old age and much reading of great books had made him very tolerant of the ways of men. It surprised him to find that he was really angry with his curate. At first he was well pleased at the heat of his feeling. It was righteous indignation, a jealousy for what was good. He began planning how he would exercise the authority vested in him as parish priest. He would forbid his curate to have anything more to do with the Land League. He would prevent the young man making speeches and stirring the people up to evil doing. He would write to the Bishop and complain that Father O'Sullivan was insubordinate.

He rose, walked over to the fireplace, fumbled on the dark chimney-piece, found a candle and a box of matches. Above the fireplace in a little black frame hung a card on which, delicately illuminated, were a few words from the *Imitation of Christ*. During all the years of his priesthood Father Staunton had kept this illuminated card hung somewhere so that he saw it daily. The thing itself was very dear to him. It had been wrought by his sister, a nun in a French convent.

She had chosen the words, had drawn the letters and the ornaments which surrounded them with delicate taste and patient care. She had given it to her brother at his ordination, years and years, nearly fifty years before. She was dead. Twenty years before he had seen her grave in the convent cemetery and her name graven on the slab in the convent chapel. There remained to him just these words from her hand; a reminder now of childish games, of hopes and high emotions confessed to each other and shared in early youth; of the dedication of his life and hers to God.

The candle he lit shone for a moment on the words, and then its flame died down to a tiny spark, the dry wick curling red over the unmelted wax. But the moment's light was sufficient. He read: "*Ad te ipsum oculos reflecte.*" The context was perfectly familiar to him. He could have said the whole chapter off by heart. Now, before the flame of his candle swelled again to give him light, he remembered sentence after sentence of stark exhortation. "Beware of judging the deeds of other men. In judging others a man engages in futile labour. We lose the power of right judgment through love of ourselves." With the recollection of the words there came on him a sense of the strange spirit of the book in which they stood. Like many another before him, and many since his time, Father Staunton became the victim of the fascination of utter self-denial. Thomas à Kempis set Jesus of Nazareth before the eyes of men as no one else ever did. The man who has once felt the tender pathos of the sternness that breathes out of the words of *The Imitation* can never reckon on escaping from the slavery of Jesus. He may lose sight for a while of the Master of whom his soul is enamoured; he may put out of his mind the

words so that they do not haunt or trouble him ; but at unexpected moments, at inconvenient times, just when he desires them least, the words will come back to him, the figure of the Master will be before him, the passionate pleading of the sorrowful eyes will compel him.

Father Staunton took his candle and with a hand that shook pitifully carried it over to the table. He understood quite clearly that his anger with Father O'Sullivan was not righteous or noble. It was a base thing. It came from a sense of personal slight, of outraged dignity. It had its root in that selfishness, that *privatus amor*, against which the book warned him. With the revulsion of feeling which followed this flash of self-knowledge he saw his curate with other eyes. The young man was earnest—more than earnest—was passionate for a cause, and for him at least there was no personal gain in view, no selfish motive at the back of what he did. He was fighting, but fighting for others, not for himself, and those others were the poor, the despised, the seemingly helpless. Men's blood is hot when they fight. A young man's blood boils in him when he is putting forth all his strength. How is he to stop to contemplate the hideousness of wounds, the ghastly spectacle of hacked bodies? How is he to find time or heart to pity groaning men? Father Staunton understood and shuddered.

"May God forgive us all," he murmured, "for our hatred and our bitterness."

But though he understood, though he could sympathise with his curate and even admire him, the old priest's mind was too clear, his eye too single, to allow him to confuse right and wrong together. The ways in which the Land League worked, the tyranny by which its battle was being fought, were not right.

Father O'Sullivan, with his passionate sense of wrong to be righted, might grow confused about plain issues. But the older man, standing apart a little way from the strife, brought into touch with Jesus of Nazareth, could not think that God's battles were fought by such means.

"I shall warn my people," he said. "I must warn them or be false to my duty as a priest. Maybe they will not listen, but I shall warn them."

Then he drew his paper over to him and began to write. But the idea of a letter to his Bishop complaining of Father O'Sullivan's conduct had gone from his mind. Instead he wrote to Stephen Butler. It is curious nowadays to think of a parish priest writing a confidential letter to a Protestant landlord. The agrarian struggle has left behind it many evil fruits, and among them the almost total separation between the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant gentry of Ireland. These two classes no longer know each other. Even the best men of each find it hard to work with the others for what both believe to be right. A generation of priests has grown up which knows nothing of the gentry, which dislikes and distrusts them as all men do strangers. The remains of the landlord party, remembering the part taken by the clergy in the land war, look upon the priests as hereditary enemies. But for Father Staunton there was nothing strange about writing to Stephen Butler. In his eyes the landlord was still what he had been once—the natural leader and guide of his people. He knew Stephen well, liked him, and trusted him. It seemed that at a time when people were listening to counsels of lawlessness and breaking free from all restraints, when the stability of the little society at

Dhulough was threatened, that the landlord ought to be at home among his people.

Therefore he wrote at length to Stephen Butler. He told him about the growing strength of the Land League in the neighbourhood, of the outrages that had been committed, of the boycotting, of the attack upon Mr. Manders.

"I am sure," he went on, "that you are very busy in London with your Parliament work. I read about your doings in the papers. No doubt it is all very interesting and very important. Perhaps you may succeed in achieving something, even in getting for Ireland what I know you want. Whether it would be good for us if you did get it I cannot tell. But I am sure that you ought to be at home with us now. We need your help here. I am sure that there is more important work waiting for you in Dhulough than any you can find in England. I mean to do my best with the people. But I think you can do a great deal that I cannot. They have always liked you personally, and you come of the old stock, which means a great deal to Irishmen."

It is not surprising, considering the friendship which existed between him and Stephen, that Father Staunton should have written the letter. It is surprising that he should have so little understood the situation in Ireland as to suppose that Stephen Butler's presence would have the smallest effect in staying the progress of the Land League. Neither then nor for many years afterwards would any landlord in Connacht lead or guide the people. A violent, passionate class hatred swept from the minds of the peasantry all feeling of loyalty to the aristocracy. The distinction between good landlords and bad was obliterated in the people's minds. The representative of a family which had been settled

among them for many generations, which had suffered in their trouble, helped them in their need, paid its victim to the destroying angel in the famine time, was a landlord. The alien who had bought an estate for less than its value, taken rents as a speculator takes the profits of his investments, who lived in London and regarded Ireland as a tea merchant does his garden in Ceylon—he was nothing worse than a landlord. There was nothing worse for him to be.

Father Staunton did not realise this. Few men did at first. Stephen Butler, hearing what was happening in Ireland, in touch ~~more~~ or less with some of his own party who were taking a leading part in the agitation, was beginning to guess at the meaning of the new spirit in the country and to feel his own helplessness. Nevertheless he took the priest's letter as a plain call to a duty which could not be refused. He returned to Ireland to face the trouble which was upon the country, just as his father had returned to face the famine.

CHAPTER XVI

ON Sunday at midday mass, Father Staunton spoke his mind to the people about the Land League. He reminded them that years before he had warned them against the Fenian Society. He appealed to the history of that movement as a proof of the wisdom of the words he then spoke to them.

"It won't be good for yourselves or your families," he said, "if you take to lawless ways. No good ever comes of taking the law into your own hands. You'll be liable to suffer for it in the end, as many others have suffered before you."

Then he reminded them that besides the laws of men, breaches of which may sometimes escape the punishment due to them, there is a higher law, the law of God.

"You ought to obey that law," he said, "because you love it. But there are some of you, either strangers as I hope, or men of your own parish, that don't love the law of God. I warn you now that there's no escaping punishment for breaking it. It may be in this life or it may be not till the life to come, but here or hereafter the punishment is sure."

More he said in the same strain, and as he spoke his voice gathered strength from his earnestness. There was no doubt that he spoke from his heart with intense conviction. But he felt from the very beginning that he was saying what the people were unwilling to hear.

The men stood sullen with downcast eyes. As he continued speaking he became aware that his congregation was definitely hostile to him. Here and there, indeed, a woman burst into tears, moved to emotion by the solemnity and earnestness with which he spoke. Nor was there any outward sign of disapproval. There was perfect silence. There was no want of respect in the behaviour of the people. But the curious and subtle sense of the sympathy of his audience which comes to every public speaker warned him that his words were wasted, that the people did not believe him, or believing, did not mean to obey.

After mass was over he crossed the road to his presbytery. A number of men were loitering near the chapel gate. Not one of them lifted his hat as the priest passed. Yet the distance at which they stood was such that he could not feel sure that any actual disrespect was intended. Nor could he be certain that he was meant to overhear the words they said. Yet one remark reached his ears—

“It’s a pity Father O’Sullivan wasn’t at mass to-day.”

It was Father O’Sullivan’s duty on Sundays to serve the outlying chapel at Cuslough. He was not usually present at midday mass in Dhulough. The remark he overheard struck Father Staunton as a strange one. He stood still for a moment, half intending to turn aside and speak to the men. Then he thought it better to leave the matter alone, and entered the gate of the presbytery. As he did so he heard another voice, and this time he was sure the words were meant to reach him—

“Father O’Sullivan’s not so fond of eating his dinner up at the big house with the landlord.”

It was with a poor appetite that Father Staunton sat down to his midday meal. He had done what he believed to be his duty. He had spoken nothing but what he was sure was the truth. But the people were very angry with him. There crept over him a numb feeling. He pushed his plate away, unable to swallow the morsel in his mouth. A sensation of nausea seized him. He feared that he might be actually sick. Then he grew cold and trembled. It was not that he feared his people or their hostility. He did not fear them, but he loved them very much. He had baptised half the adults of the parish and most of the children. He had taught them, presented them for confirmation, given them their first communion. He had listened to the confessions of these men and women till he knew their very hearts. They were his people. He loved them. It went near to breaking his heart to think that they would turn against him. He heard the noise of Father O'Sullivan's car being driven into the yard. The curate had returned from Cuslough and in a few minutes would come in and speak to him as usual. He waited, but Father O'Sullivan did not appear. Then he heard men walking down the gravel path which led from the front of the presbytery to the stable yard. He glanced through the window and recognised them. They were some of those who had formed the group outside the chapel from which the remarks that pained him had proceeded. No doubt they were going to tell Father O'Sullivan what had been said in the chapel. He waited for a long time. Then at last he heard footsteps in the passage. The door of his room was flung open and his curate entered.

The young priest's face was quite white and his eyes were bright with anger. He strode across the room

and stood opposite the table at which Father Staunton sat at his dinner.

"You denounced the League from the altar to-day," he said.

Father Staunton sat still. His eyes were on the dish of meat growing cold on the table before him, and he did not raise them. He laid down his knife and fork and clasped his hands together, twining the fingers round each other and then rubbing them stiffly together. A casual onlooker might have supposed that the older man was a culprit—a desperately frightened culprit—struggling in the face of a judge to find some excuse for his evil-doing. Father O'Sullivan glared at him and then repeated what he had said before—

"I hear that you denounced the League from off the altar to-day."

He spoke even more truculently than he had at first. Perhaps he imagined that Father Staunton was afraid of him and might be overborne with fierce tones and angry words. Like many men of gentle nature and kindly heart, Father Staunton shrank from fierceness and anger with the same kind of dislike which a delicate lady feels for foul language or actual filth. But he was no coward, and he was not, in spite of his downcast eyes and nervously working hands, in the least afraid of his curate. He looked up at last and met Father O'Sullivan's angry gaze calmly.

"I did my duty this morning when I warned the people from sin, and I am prepared to do it again. Nor do I think that you have a right to call me to account for what I say to them."

A man less intensely enthusiastic, less profoundly convinced of the justice of the cause for which he

worked, might have been cowed by the quiet dignity with which the old man spoke. But Father O'Sullivan neither heeded nor observed it. A man of high moral fibre, of that sympathy which comes of culture, might have been moved, touched by the gentleness with which the answer was given. Father O'Sullivan was a strong man and an honest, but his outlook upon life was a narrow one. There was not room in his heart for sympathy with an opponent, nor had he the capacity for seeing things from any point of view but his own.

"There is to be a meeting of the League this evening," he said, "at which I shall preside. I shall make it clear that it is only one priest here and there who intends to desert the people in their trouble."

"I," said Father Staunton, "shall drive over this afternoon and explain to Mr. Manders that I have no part with the ruffians who attempted to take his life last week, or with those whose violent language urged ignorant men to the commission of such crime."

A sudden spasm contorted the curate's face.

"You mean," he said, "that you regard me as a murderer or responsible for murder? Such a suspicion is unjust and horrible. But I say this, if Mr. Manders had been shot dead, while I should abhor the crime, I should maintain and believe that he got no more than he deserved."

He turned and left the room. Father Staunton, leaving his almost untasted dinner, drew his chair close to the fire. He crouched over it, holding painfully cold hands outstretched to the blaze. He believed that once again he had done his duty, but the belief brought him little comfort. He knew that there was anger, fierce and bitter resentment, against him in the curate's heart. He knew that there was a quarrel between them, and

that for a long time there could be no fellowship or friendliness. It brought intolerable misery to him to think that he, a priest, must share the labours of the sanctuary with another, also a priest, who felt bitterly towards him; that alternately they would offer from the same altar the sacrifice which expressed the unfathomable love of God, and that all the time there would be between them a darkness of hate separating their souls from one another, and perhaps both their souls from the Divine Master.

Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to do what he said he would do. Mr. Manders was a man for whom he had little liking, and with whose way of life he had small sympathy. But all the more he felt it necessary to make Mr. Manders understand that he, the representative of the Church in the parish, had no sympathy with lawlessness and crime.

He ordered his horse to be harnessed and put into the trap.

"I shall drive myself," he said. "Tell Patsey that, I won't interfere with his Sunday afternoon."

The housekeeper was very solicitous for his comfort. She warmed his old dreadnought coat before the kitchen fire, warmed his gloves, sought out a long woollen comforter.

"You won't be late, Father?" she said. "The wind is bitter cold, and with the cough that's at you, you oughtn't to be going out at all."

She wrapped him, protesting feebly, in the various garments she had prepared. She tucked the rug round his feet and legs, and all the while she grumbled about the cough that would surely be the death of him some day, and the fact that he had hardly tasted his dinner. She had lived for years with Father Staunton, and for

years had grumbled about his ways to her friends ; but she loved him in her heart, and this excessive care for his comfort was her way of showing that she was aware that Father O'Sullivan had been vexing him, and that her sympathies were with her old master, and not with the curate.

The road to Cuslough is bleak, and after he had passed a mile of it Father Staunton began to appreciate the bitter coldness of the wind. It crept in between the buttons of the frieze coat and chilled his body ; it blew up under the rug and turned his legs to stone ; it numbed his hands, so that he could not feel the reins between his fingers. He was too miserably cold to notice the people who passed him on the road, though they might have interested him. Heverin, the publican and moneylender of Cuslough, drove towards Dhulough on his car. Heverin was a leading member of the Land League Committee, and had been elected its treasurer. Having drunk whisky enough to make him self-assertive, he drove as if he had an exclusive right to the use of the centre of the road. Father Staunton's horse—an aged animal wise enough to recognise the danger of asserting his master's rights against the treasurer of the Land League—stood quietly in the ditch till Heverin had passed. Johnny Darcy came next, better dressed and more prosperous-looking than he had been before the meeting at which the Land League was started. It is a fortunate thing that lofty patriotism, which lands some men in ruin and gaol, which even leads to the gallows, occasionally puts a decent coat on the backs of its professors. With Darcy were two others who walked beside him, respect and admiration expressed in their mien and gait. Johnny Darcy's was a spirit suited for stirring times. These

were his humbler followers. All three were hangers-on of the League's committee. They stared at Father Staunton, and touched their hats to him with a certain insolence of gesture. Others followed them—three or four men. It seemed that Cuslough was to be adequately represented at the meeting, over which Father O'Sullivan intended to preside.

Mr. Manders ate his dinner in the middle of the day on Sundays. Most good Christians do this, because Sunday afternoon is a dull and difficult time to get through, and a heavy meal at an unaccustomed hour induces sleep; and in sleep the hours pass swiftly and agreeably. Mr. Manders, who usually lunched at his office on a sandwich and a glass of sherry, always slumbered profoundly on Sunday afternoon. He was asleep when Father Staunton, stiff with cold, was shown into the comfortable dining-room. Mr. Manders received him with blinking eyes, but the greatest cordiality.

"Sit down, Father Staunton. Why, bless my soul, you are desperately cold. Come over to the fire."

He piled on more turf as he spoke and pulled the deep chair in which he had been sleeping close to the blaze. He took the priest by the shoulders and pushed him into it.

"Wait now," he said. "Don't begin to talk yet. I won't hear a word about your business, whatever it is that brought you here, till you are properly warm again."

He went to the door of the room, and shouted to his servants—

"Here, Mary, Tom, Bridgie, whichever it is of you that's supposed to be at home this afternoon! Bring me a kettle of boiling water. Never mind your caps and

aprons or whatever it is you haven't got on. I want the water at once and boiling."

In Mr. Manders' house a demand for boiling water was not uncommon, and there was hardly an hour of the day or night at which it might not be made. Mary, Tom, and Bridgie always had a kettle on the fire. It was Bridgie, the cook, whose turn it was to stay at home on the Sunday afternoon of Father Staunton's visit. At the first sound of her master's voice she started from the kitchen with the kettle in her hand, and almost before Mr. Manders had finished his exhortation she had it singing beside the piled-up turf on the dining-room hearth. Mr. Manders poured a liberal allowance of whisky into a tumbler, adding the boiling water, and stood the steaming drink on a small table beside the priest's chair. Then he brought over the sugar-bowl from the sideboard, took a lemon, a knife, and a spoon, and placed them all beside the tumbler.

"Mix in the condiments for yourself," he said, "and don't let me hear a word out of your mouth till you've put yourself outside that glass of punch."

Father Staunton sniffed the mixture. The very steam of it restored some colour to his face. He sipped it and gasped; sipped again and coughed; took a good mouthful, and felt the warmth tingling to his finger-tips. He drank half the contents of the tumbler. Even his feet began to feel less numb. He stretched them out towards the blaze, and lay back in the chair. Then he set the tumbler down, and sat straight.

"I came to tell you, Mr. Manders, that I deplore and condemn in the strongest manner the violent proceedings of the Land League, and especially the attempt which was made on your life."

"You needn't have come all this way to tell me that," said Mr. Manders. "I know you too well, Father Staunton, to suppose for a moment that you approve of this work. You're a gentleman and a Christian. Of course, you wouldn't mix yourself up with a pack of murderous blackguards. I don't need you to tell me such a thing as that."

"It's bad work," said the priest. "Bad work, very bad. It's worse than the Fenian times. It's a terrible thing to me to think that in my parish men should be going about in danger of their lives."

"Come, now, you mustn't take these things too seriously. After all, these fellows are rotten bad shots. They missed me the other night at twenty yards, and practically a sitting shot. I'd hardly have believed it possible to miss at the distance, especially when the ruffian had a stone wall to lean his gun on."

"I wish you would ask for police protection. They may not miss you the next time."

Mr. Manders' face hardened suddenly. The cheery light died out of his eyes. There was a cold, hard look in them when he answered.

"The man that misses me the next time will shoot no more, unless he enlists in the devil's militia and carries a rifle in hell. I'll shoot him, and I'll shoot him dead! As for police protection, I won't have it. I'll show these blackguards that I'm not afraid of them. The worst thing you can do is to let fellows of that sort think you're frightened. I'll go about my business as usual, and I'll have no police driving after me. But I'll have a revolver in my pocket and a Winchester repeating rifle on the wall of the car. You might mention that to your curate, Father Staunton, and let him tell the committee of the League. They know I can shoot straight,

and they'll have to make their best murderer pretty drunk before he takes me on again."

"My curate——" began Father Staunton.

"I don't want to talk about your curate," said Mr. Manders. "I have my own opinion of that young man, but it's not one which it would suit me to tell you, or, for the matter of that, which would suit you to sit and listen to."

"Still, I'd like you to know——"

"It's not the least bit of use, Father Staunton. There's no good telling me that he's this, and that, and the other thing, and all that's excellent. He started the infernal League here, and that's enough for me."

Father Staunton sighed. The room grew dark while they talked, and at last Mr. Manders rose and began to search for a box of matches that he might light the candles which stood on the chimney-piece.

"I must be getting home before it gets too late," said the priest. "My trap is in your yard. I'll say good-bye to you here, and go and get it."

Mr. Manders went over to the window and looked out.

"It has begun to snow," he said. "You oughtn't to attempt to drive. Stay here for the night. I can have a bed made up for you; it won't be the least trouble. You can drive home to-morrow morning."

But Father Staunton would not accept the offered hospitality. In spite of all that could be said to him he struggled into his great-coat again, got out his horse and trap, and started on his drive home.

In spite of the snow the drive was less trying than it had been earlier in the afternoon. The wind was on his back and the horse, with his head turned homewards, travelled fast. But Father Staunton's heart was heavy.

He foresaw much trouble. He knew better than Mr. Manders how strong a hold the League had on the people.

He approached the village of Dhulough. It surprised him to see lights moving about up and down the street, and to hear the sound of men's voices in loud talk. Then as he entered the village his horse shied. Two men had stepped suddenly from the shadow of a house and stood in the middle of the street. Father Staunton gathered the reins tightly in his hand, whipped the horse, and drove past them. Immediately he heard a low curse behind him. Then from the darkness on each side of him came the noise of booing. Lights flashed before him, and were suddenly extinguished. Fierce shouts came to him from every direction. His horse, thoroughly frightened, began to plunge.

"Do you know who I am?" shouted Father Staunton. "I'm your parish priest."

"We know you well enough. You've been plotting and scheming with the agent; God damn him!"

Then the crowd yelled: "Yah! Yah! Yah!"

The horse became almost unmanageable. Father Staunton's nerve did not fail him, but his hands were an old man's hands, not very firm or steady on the reins, and they were numb again with cold. A man came quickly down the street from the direction of the presbytery. Father Staunton recognised him by his walk. It was Rafferty, the old Fenian. He seized the horse's head and began stroking the creature's neck. Then, still holding the ring of the bit in his hand, he turned to the men who shouted.

"You blackguards and cowards!" he said. "You'd come out here in the dark to frighten an old man's horse. You'd boo and hoot your priest that never did

anything but good for you. But you wouldn't fight like men when you had the chance, neither you nor your fathers before you. It's all you're fit for, to frighten women and priests, and shoot in the dark behind walls, and cut the tails off cattle. You're cowards! Go home and hide yourselves!"

He was apparently right in his estimate of the character of the men who surrounded him. No one made any answer. Then the police sergeant, followed by four of his men, appeared. They came from their barrack at the far end of the village. There was a stampede of men rushing through the snow out of the village. The police advanced at a run with their batons in their hands.

"Stop, sergeant," cried Father Staunton, "there's no harm done. It's only some foolish boys. Don't go after them. Let them be."

Old Rafferty led the horse into the presbytery yard and helped the priest out of the trap. Father Staunton was trembling and unsteady on his feet. He took Rafferty's arm and allowed himself to be led to his own door. The police stood at the gate, uncertain whether their services would be required again. The housekeeper, scared and white, opened the door.

"Where is Father O'Sullivan?" asked the old priest.

"He's up in his own room, your reverence," said the housekeeper.

"He is, Father," added Rafferty; "and, what's more, he's been there for the last two hours or more."

"Thank God!" said Father Staunton. "But come in, Rafferty. Come in and sit down awhile. I must thank you."

But Rafferty shook his head.

"I must be getting off to my own home," he said.

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"It's a long row I'll have to-night with the storm that's in it, but the wind's off shore, and, thank God, I'm strong in the arms still."

Father Staunton went to bed very early. He lay awake during the greater part of the night, coughing constantly and very miserable. The next day the housekeeper, thoroughly alarmed, sent for the doctor. It appeared that there was nothing worse the matter than a slight congestion of one of his lungs, but for some time Father O'Sullivan had charge of the parish.

CHAPTER XVII

STEPHEN BUTLER arrived at Dhulough late one evening during the week which followed Father Staunton's denunciation of the Land League. As he drove home he heard from his groom an account of the demonstration in the village on the previous Sunday evening. It was difficult to believe that the people had really shown disrespect and hostility to their parish priest. Stephen questioned and cross-questioned the groom, willing to think, if possible, that the story he heard was an exaggerated account of some trifling occurrence. But the answers to his questions brought him no satisfaction. The groom was a Roman Catholic and had heard the priest's sermon about the Land League. He had also heard the comments of the people on their way home after Mass. It was certain that a meeting of the Land League Committee had been held the same evening, and that Father O'Sullivan had presided at it. The people, according to the groom's account, had stood in groups in the street waiting for the conclusion of the meeting. Father O'Sullivan had gone straight home to the presbytery and shut himself up. Very few others had gone home.

"Do you mean to say that you think Father O'Sullivan encouraged the people to hoot the parish priest?" asked Stephen.

"Indeed he did not, sir. Why would he do such a thing? They say he was mad angry the next day

about it. Didn't I say he was at home and out of the way?"

"Well, then, who goaded the people to do such a thing? They'd never have done it if they'd been left to themselves."

"Unless it was some of the boys from beyond out at Cuslough, sir. But, sure, nobody knows."

Stephen Butler slept uneasily. Things were evidently more serious than he expected.

Next day he set out to drive to Mr. Manders' house immediately after breakfast. It was a fair day in Dhulough, and the village was crowded. Going through the streets, he noticed a definite hostility towards him in the attitude of the people. Men turned their backs when they saw him approaching. Women went into their houses and shut the doors. No one except the policeman, who stood at the gate of the barrack, saluted him. This was a curious experience for Stephen. He was accustomed to have hats touched to him, to greet the men and women who passed, and to be answered by them. He could scarcely believe that the change in the people's demeanour was deliberate and intentional. Outside the village he pulled up his horse and bid the groom drive slowly along the road. He himself walked back through the village to the gate of his own demesne. The people saw him coming, and this time the street was almost entirely empty. He had no opportunity of speaking to any one. He turned and walked through the street again. A young man whom he did not know, possibly one of those alluded to by his servant as "boys from beyond out at Cuslough," stood in the middle of the street. He stared Stephen full in the face, and, as he passed, spat on the ground. Stephen walked on. In a minute

he was overtaken by the young man, who turned towards him, spat again, and then passed. Twenty yards further up the street the man turned, walked towards Stephen, and once more as he passed spat. There was no possibility of escaping from the conclusion that he meant to be insulting. Stephen hesitated. His first impulse, not wholly an unnatural one, was to turn, meet the man, and knock him down. He resisted the temptation, quickened his pace, and got clear of the village street before he was overtaken again.

He drove rapidly to Mr. Manders' house. He found the agent in his dining-room with the remains of his breakfast on the table before him. He was not an early riser, and there was seldom any necessity for him to be in his office before eleven o'clock.

"Hullo," said Mr. Manders. "What's brought you home? I thought you'd have been up to your eyes in defending the cause of the poor downtrodden Irishman against the Saxon oppressor. If you'll excuse my saying so, you're rather a fool to come home just now. Ireland is a very good country to be out of at present. It's in the devil of a state, and getting rapidly worse."

"What has happened?" asked Stephen. "I hear that Father Staunton was booed in the street of the village on Sunday night, and the same wasn't far off happening to me this morning."

"Oh, that's nothing, I assure you. I was shot at myself last week."

"I saw something about that in the papers. But surely it wasn't true? They didn't actually attempt your life?"

"The bullet ripped up the cushion on the well of the car, and must have gone uncommonly near taking the ear off the horse. I don't know whether you call that

attempting my life. If they only wanted to frighten me, I wish they would have the decency to fire blank cartridges."

"My God, how horrible!"

"Oh, that's only the beginning. There's worse coming, I suspect. You see, we're just having a little foretaste of what Home Rule will be like when we get it."

Stephen winced and stood silent.

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Manders. "I oughtn't to have said that. I forgot for the moment that you are a Home Ruler. I only remembered that you're a gentleman, and in the same boat with the rest of us."

"Never mind. I must expect to have such things said to me. But, mind you, I am not going to change my opinions. This isn't nationalism, it's a conspiracy."

"All right. We won't quarrel over the name of the thing. The point is, how are we going to get in the rents and still keep our skins whole? We can argue out the difference between nationalism and the Land League afterwards."

"I suppose you offered my tenants twenty-five per cent reduction as I told you, on account of the bad harvest."

"I offered it. Yes."

"Well?"

"I haven't had a penny paid, except by two or three fellows, who came up here after dark with their money, and begged and prayed of me not to tell on them."

"But surely——"

"Look here, Butler, it's as well for you to be clear about this matter. Your property is under-rented, let at less than the market-value of the land, and you offer a reduction of twenty-five per cent off that. Very well. Lord Daintree's estate is fairly rented. I don't

say rack-rented, for it's not, and he offers no reduction. Mr. Snell's little bit of property round Cuslough is rack-rented. That's the position of the three estates I manage. But not one of the three of you is going to get his rents paid. This Land League isn't an organisation for obtaining fair rents or anything of that sort. It's a conspiracy to prevent the payment of any rent, fair or unfair, and the weapons it uses are outrage and terrorism. Come to the office with me and I'll show you something that will make you open your eyes."

Mr. Manders' office was conveniently situated, being in fact a wing of his house, with an entrance door of its own. It contained two rooms, an outer office in which the clerks worked, and an inner office which communicated with the house by a private door, in which Mr. Manders did business. Into this room he led Stephen Butler.

"Look at that," said Mr. Manders, pointing to the chimney-piece.

Stephen Butler looked. At first it seemed to him that his agent had hit on an eccentric plan of papering his walls with old letters instead of putting them into the waste-paper basket. For about three feet above the chimney-piece the wall was covered with scraps of paper, some stuck up with fragments of the selvedge of postage stamps, some with dabs of gum, others with tacks or pins driven through them.

"Go over and read them," said Mr. Manders.

Stephen began at the top row and read across the fireplace.

"Your graive is dug. If their is a prair in your dastardly hart, say it before you're damned."

The spelling was eccentric, purposely eccentric as it seemed, for "prayer," a comparatively easy word, was

spelt wrong, while the writer had been successful with "dastardly" and "damned." The next letter was adorned at the top with a picture of a coffin. It was brief, but very much to the point.

"The abuv," he read, "is for you."

Afterwards came a much more grandiloquent epistle whose authors despised the disguise of bad spelling.

"At the Council of the Confederation of the Green Sons of Liberty it was decided, after vote taken, and by the unanimous opinion of the members, that sentence of death should be inflicted on Mr. James Manders, Esq., J.P. (so called). You are hereby given notice of the fact. Signed by order."

"That one," said Mr. Manders, "was dropped into my letter-box some time on Wednesday night. On Thursday the ruffians had a shot at me and missed, missed, by God, and they couldn't have been twenty paces distant when they fired! Have you had enough of those things? They're not all mine. Some of them came to my clerks. Poor devils, they were frightened into fits at first, but they're getting accustomed to the feel of it now. More of them came to tenants suspected of having paid their rents. I'm making a collection of the documents. I hope to have the whole room papered with them in the course of the next few years; that is to say if I haven't succeeded before that in shooting all the fellows that write them."

There was a knock at the door and one of the clerks entered the room.

"Mr. Heverin and another man want to see you, sir."

"Mr. Heverin! Do you mean Pat Heverin, the publican from Cuslough?"

The clerk grinned.

"Well, hasn't he the devil's own insolence?"

Mr. Manders turned to Stephen and added in explanation—

"He's the secretary of the Dhulough and Cuslough branch of the League. And who might the other gentleman be?" he asked.

"He didn't give his name," said the clerk; "but I think he's the son of old Sheridan, the man we evicted on the Snell estate."

"Very well," said Mr. Manders. "Tell them I'm engaged at present, but I'll see them in a quarter of an hour or so. They can cool their heels outside till I'm ready."

The clerk left the room.

"Don't let me interfere with your business," said Stephen. "I'll go outside and smoke a pipe till you've finished talking to these men."

"Don't do anything of the sort," said Mr. Manders. "I should like you to be present to hear what they say. It's sure to be amusing. I didn't send that message because I couldn't see them at once, but because it's good for these fellows to be kept waiting. It takes the keen edge off their self-importance. They are a deputation, you may be sure, and they're swelled up with a notion of the grandeur of their position. There's nothing better for them than to stroll about a bit outside and feel that nobody's taking any notice of them. In the meanwhile we'll get ready for them."

Mr. Manders unlocked a drawer in his writing-desk and took out a revolver. He laid it on a pile of papers in front of him. Then he took out a handful of cartridges from a box and put them beside the revolver.

"Surely," said Stephen, watching him, "that can't be necessary."

"Not in the least. Heverin's the last man in Ireland

who'd attempt anything so risky as an assault on me. But he'll go away and tell the rest of his gang that I threatened his life. That'll make a hero of him and teach the others caution. As a matter of fact the thing is not loaded." He took it up and pulled the trigger three or four times. "Besides, the cartridges wouldn't fit it. Any way, it isn't the weapon I'd use if I meant business. It's an old pattern, far too heavy in the handle; kicks like the mischief and always throws high. Oh, no, I have quite a different tool for real use. This is for show. It looks murderous. You watch Heverin's face when I put my hand upon it carelessly in the course of conversation. See if he doesn't go white about the gills."

"Don't do that sort of thing," said Stephen. "What's the good of it? Reason with the men. Talk sense to them."

"That's all very fine. I may tell you that I have reasoned with them and talked sense. But you might just as well reason with a tiger in the Zoo when he's got your arm dragged through the bars of his cage. I listened to you talking nationalism in the past and didn't worry you or laugh at you, but I knew very well what would come of it. And now this is a serious business. We've got away from speculative opinions. We're dealing with hard facts. When my life is in danger I feel entitled to take the best precautions I can to protect it."

Mr. Manders rang a small hand-bell which stood on his desk. The clerk opened the door and ushered in Mr. Heverin and his companion, young Sheridan, son of the evicted tenant. Heverin came forward and bowed to the agent. Then, catching sight of Stephen, he said—

"I'm glad to see you home again, Mr. Butler."

He stood rubbing his hands together and smiling in a vacuous manner. Much in the same way he would have stood and smiled behind his counter a few months before if a respected customer had entered his shop and given him an order. His eyes moved from Mr. Manders' face to Stephen's and back again. Then he glanced quickly round the room. He started when he saw the decorative letters stuck above the chimney-piece, started again and fidgeted uneasily, rubbing his feet on the carpet, when he caught sight of the revolver and the cartridges. Mr. Manders eyed him with quiet contempt. It was quite obvious that Mr. Heverin was a coward. His companion behaved differently. Sheridan was a young man, probably not more than five-and-twenty years of age. He was of more than ordinary height, and looked even taller than he was because he was slightly built and was besides extremely thin, almost emaciated. His skin was dark; his clean-shaved face sallow and dusky. He had long, straight black hair, locks of which hung over his forehead and gave him a wild, unkempt appearance. He had large, dark eyes—eyes capable of expressing, and accustomed to express, an extraordinary range of emotions. They were the eyes of a dreamer, of one for whom old romantic things might be plainly visible, who might see the fairy cavalry sweep across the country on stormy nights; who might, under certain conditions, see the Son of God walking in beggar man's attire through the fields of Ireland. He was the best man in the whole county at playing the fiddle, and the people said that when he played his face was wonderful to look at. They saw in his eyes then the passion of love at its highest, love that was pure of all sensual feeling, the

supreme desire for some ideal perfection. But those great eyes of his were capable also of letting white-hot anger, fury, and an unquenchable desire for revenge shine through them. Mr. Manders had seen nothing but a ragged peasant with a sulky face standing a little apart from the crowd on the morning when the Sheridans were turned out of house and home. But if Mr. Manders had looked more closely, if he had been capable of seeing what was in the young man's face, he, brave man as he was, might have trembled. The same light of fierce passion was in his eyes now as he stood, with his arms dropped stiff by his sides, staring straight in front of him.

Since the eviction he had lived among his neighbours, going from house to house, doing a day's work for one or another, often sleeping in the open air, often going for a day or more without food. The committee of the Land League had associated this man with Heverin, because, in spite of all his fine talk, they were not very sure of Heverin. Young Sheridan was no talker. But he could be relied on to prevent any kind of treachery or double dealing.

"Well," said Mr. Manders cheerfully, "here you are and here I am. Now what do you want?"

"We come," said Mr. Heverin, "on behalf of the Land League to make certain proposals."

"Then you may just as well go home again. I don't recognise the League as a body that has any right to do business with me, and I won't hear what the League has got to say."

"It might be better for yourself to listen," said Heverin truculently.

He glanced at his companion while he spoke, as if he was anxious that his words should be noted.

"If you mean to threaten me," said Mr. Manders, "you're simply wasting your breath. You may as well understand me clearly. I'm perfectly willing to meet the tenants of any of the estates I manage, and talk to them or hear what they have to say. I won't receive deputations, or spend my time listening to the demands of a body like your League."

"Is that all the message I'm to take back again to the committee?"

Mr. Manders took up the empty revolver from the table in front of him and looked at it admiringly. Then he poised it in his hand, raised and lowered it slightly, got out his pocket-handkerchief and began to polish the barrel.

"I suppose," he said, "that you never read Roman history, Mr. Heverin?"

Heverin scowled. He had an uneasy sense that Mr. Manders was poking fun at him. He suspected some latent insult, without being able to say exactly where it lay. He was, in his own opinion, a man of great importance, occupying a responsible position as ambassador from one great belligerent power to another.

"I'm not here to be insulted," he said. "As the representative of the people I——"

Mr. Manders became exceedingly bland and polite.

"Nothing was further from my mind than to insult you. I assume with pleasure that you have studied the history of the ancient Romans. If you like I'll take it for granted that you read a chapter of Livy at every meeting of the League."

He toyed ostentatiously with the revolver.

"As a student of the classics, Mr. Heverin, you will recollect the story of the king who answered a mes-

senger by cutting the heads off all the big poppies in his garden. The messenger understood that his actions were of more importance than his words, if he spoke at all. I can't at this moment recollect whether he did or not. I hope, Mr. Heverin, that you will prove an equally sagacious messenger."

While he spoke he took up the cartridges as if to slip them into the chambers of the revolver, smiling blandly at Mr. Heverin as he held them in his hand.

Then suddenly young Sheridan spoke.

"Mr. Butler——"

Stephen started. He had not expected to be addressed. Mr. Manders interposed.

"Kindly address your remarks to me. Mr. Butler is here merely by accident and is taking no part in this discussion."

"Mr. Butler——" said young Sheridan again, without apparently heeding Mr. Manders' interruption.

Something in the man's face, the intense eagerness of his eyes, the thin drawn cheeks, the lips trembling with excitement, moved Stephen.

"Let the man say his say, Manders," he said.

"Mr. Butler," began Sheridan again. Then he stopped dead. There was something which he wanted to say, but he could find no words in which to say it.

"Mr. Butler."

Stephen smiled at him gently, kindly.

Then suddenly the words came pouring from the young man's lips rapidly, almost incoherently.

"It's little good I am at speaking any way, and no good at speaking the English. But it's this that's in my heart to say to you. Many and many's the time I've heard my father telling me of the days long ago before the famine; the way when he was a boy your father did

be coming into the house where my father was reared, and how he would be talking the Irish to the old man that was in it then, my grandfather. There was a love on my people for your people in those days. Then the famine came and the fever after it, and your father came home again, and it was more the people loved him and not less, for it's wonderful all that he did for them. But he died, and may God have mercy on him, and Gorteen and all the old townland was sold to a stranger. Maybe it couldn't be helped, for they were hard times then for landlord and tenant. But the man that came raised the rents on the people, and he raised them again and more than twice, till the money that was on them at him was what couldn't be paid, let a man work early and late. The harvests came bad on us at the latter end. We were put out. It wasn't you that would do the like of such a thing to us, but done it was. My father is in the workhouse and my mother along with him. And myself—but, sure, it's no matter about myself."

He stopped and sobbed suddenly. Then after a struggle for composure spoke again.

"I'm not begging from you, nor it's not asking mercy or pity I am. But I'm telling you this so that whatever comes you may know what the people that once were your own people and would have died for you or yours—that you may know the things they are suffering now. You're angry to-day—yes, there's anger in your heart, don't I know it? Can't I see it? But it's justice we're asking, only justice and no more. Let Mr. Manders here think what he likes and let the law, that's no law of ours nor yet of God's, do what it likes to us. But you'll remember, Mr. Butler, for the sake of them that's gone from yourself and from us, you'll remember the old times. You can't help us. I know that well.

You needn't pity us. I don't want that, nor none of us wants it. But you'll give us justice, give us justice in your own heart."

Stephen had no words in which to answer him. He walked across the room and held out his hand silently. Sheridan hesitated for a moment and then took it and held it fast in his own two hands.

"Maybe the day is coming," he said, "when you'll not give me your hand, when you'll turn your face away from me. But whether or no, I take your hand to-day, and may the Almighty God bless you and keep you."

He turned and left the room. Heverin shambled after him. It did not please Heverin that the principal part in the interview had been appropriated by Sheridan. He had imagined himself acting greatly in the tyrant's vein, Ercles' vein, and, like the lion, roaring extempore. He had in fact been snubbed and ridiculed by Mr. Manders. Sheridan, whom he thoroughly despised, had moved emotion.

CHAPTER XVIII

THINGS got much worse in the neighbourhood after Mr. Manders refused to listen to the deputation which was sent to his office. The members of the League committee were extremely angry at the contemptuous way in which their ambassadors were treated. Heverin gave them a detailed account of the interview. Nobody, except perhaps Father O'Sullivan, understood the reference to Roman history; but everybody realised that Heverin had been laughed at. No man in the world likes being laughed at. An Irishman likes it less than any one else. To be abused is the natural lot of Irish politicians, members of leagues and adherents of any cause. It is not at all unpleasant to be abused, because abuse affords an excellent opportunity for replying in even more violent language. The frown on the face of an opponent is nothing. His smile is the thing that irritates to the point of madness. Mr. Manders had smiled. He even continued to smile. His face beamed with benevolent delight when he met a prominent Land Leaguer on the road. The more savagely Father O'Sullivan and Mr. Heverin scowled or snarled the more cheerfully Mr. Manders smiled. He even winked confidentially at any one who happened to be standing near him, as if he invited appreciation of a comic situation. The feelings of the leaders of the League became extremely strong and bitter. They hated Mr. Manders,

not only officially, because he was a land agent, but with a keen personal hatred.

Father Staunton was still confined to his room and could exercise no restraining influence on the people. It is doubtful whether, even if he had been well, he could have done much. In bed he could do nothing. It was Father O'Sullivan who represented to the people the power of the Church and the spirit of religion. The return of Stephen Butler also helped indirectly to increase the ill-feeling. The local leaders of the League were anxious to widen as far as possible the breach between the people and the landlords. There was always a risk that Stephen's personal popularity, and the fact that he was a member of the Nationalist party, might give him an influence with the people. Honest enthusiasts, such as Father O'Sullivan, dreaded such influence, and it would have been fatal to the power of men like Pat Heverin. In Ireland, perhaps more than anywhere else, personality counts in a struggle. The people's leaders are always anxious to undermine the power of the man whom the people know and like ; but a demagogue will frequently rage for a long time against the unpopular opinions of a popular man without being able to make his position really intolerable.

Stephen's first reception in the streets of Dhulough was not a real test of his tenants' feelings towards him. There were many strangers in the village that day who had come to do business at the fair. Several leaders of the League were there, and the Dhulough people were nervous and uncomfortable. It was well understood in those days that a man was not wise who showed himself friendly to one counted as an enemy by the League. And all landlords, good or bad, were

enemies. The struggle which was going on throughout the country was a desperately severe one, and it was impossible for men on either side to weigh accurately the justice of what they did. But the old feelings of personal affection for Stephen, and the old respect for his family, were not dead in the hearts of the people. When the fair was over and they had their village to themselves they spoke to him again, though not so freely as they used to do before the troublous times. Some of them even confided in him that they dreaded the power of the League. But they spoke under promise of secrecy. They were not very brave, any of them. It seemed to Stephen, listening to what was whispered to him, that the people were being bullied and cowed, but he was not sure of this. The men who complained to him were not the best men, the most independent or the most intelligent. It was quite possible that those who abused the League privately were in reality only anxious to keep themselves safe; were desirous of having friends on both sides, so that whatever the issue of the struggle they might be on good terms with the winning party.

But there was one man whom Stephen found quite unchanged. Old Rafferty neither respected, loved, nor feared the League. He made no secret of the fact that he defied public opinion. He paraded through the village street one morning and announced to every one he met his intention of going up to Dhulough House to have a talk with Stephen Butler. Men looked at him, some with admiration, some doubtfully shaking their heads over his rashness, some very suspiciously. But Rafferty took no notice of the hints that were given about the folly of his conduct and the consequences that might ensue.

"I wasn't afraid in the old days," he said, "when we thought there was real fighting to be done, and when we knew that there was hanging waiting for any of us that was caught. Do you think I'm afraid of you and your League now?"

To Stephen he talked freely.

"This is what comes of your Parliament work," he said, "your going over to England, and your fine talk with English people. See the state that Ireland's got into, and you away from it."

"Come now, Rafferty," said Stephen, smiling, "you can't blame me for the Land League. I know you think we ought to be fighting with pikes in our hands——"

"Guns," said Rafferty, "not pikes."

"Well, it appears that the people have taken to shooting with guns at last. I'd have thought you'd be satisfied."

"Satisfied?" growled Rafferty. "Satisfied with a parcel of cowards who shoot from behind hedges and shoot at other Irishmen—as good Irishmen, maybe, as themselves? That's not the kind of shooting we wanted. We were for going out into the open and shooting fair in battle against Englishmen. I don't call this work fighting."

"Well, but from all I hear, it's Fenians like yourself who are at the bottom of the worst of this Land League work. They tell me that only for the Fenians that are scattered up and down the country there'd be no backbone in the League at all."

"Fenians, indeed! Would you call them Fenians? Maybe they were Fenians once, but they've been got at by politicians, got at and talked to and seduced. What do the leaders, the real leaders of the Fenians, say about the League? Tell me that."

"I don't know. How on earth could I know? You're the only Fenian I ever spoke to in my life."

"Well, I know. And I'll tell you. But what's the good of talking? You're a better Irishman than the most of the gentry. You're a good Irishman; I'll say that for you. If you weren't, I wouldn't be here talking to you. But you're like all the rest, like every man of your class I ever heard of; you want to put down all the mischief and villainy there is in the country to the Fenians. It's little any of you know about the Fenians, or what they felt, or what they wanted. But if somebody's boycotted or somebody's cattle are killed, you all say it's the Fenians that did it. When old Father Staunton was hooted in the street the other night, they said it was the Fenians that led the people on, though myself, that is a Fenian, was the only man in the place to stand up for him."

"Why did you do that? I thought that Father Staunton, like all the rest of the clergy, was against your movement?"

"So he was; so they all were. But that had nothing to do with the case one way or other—either good or bad. Would I stand by and see an old man, that everybody knows is a good man, insulted for holding his own opinions and sticking to them? It's little, as I was just saying, that you know about the Fenians. We were always for freedom—every man's freedom—and against tyranny, whether it was the tyranny of the English or the Church or the people themselves."

His talk with Rafferty interested Stephen. He became more intimate than ever with the old man in the course of the next few weeks. Visiting the hut on the island he was shown treasures other than manuscripts and books. He saw letters written by leaders of

the Fenian movement in the days of its strength, and more recent letters from members of the organisation exiled in America. He examined Rafferty's dearest possession, his rifle. It was kept carefully cleaned and oiled. Once before his imprisonment Rafferty had hoped to use it. Even now, though the prospect of an armed insurrection was utterly remote, he cherished the weapon and had it ready for instant use.

"A good enough gun," said Stephen, handling it, "though hardly up to the latest patterns."

"It would shoot straight yet."

"No doubt it would. I'd rather it was in your hands, Rafferty, than owned by some of the hangers-on of the League. I wouldn't like to trust them with it. I'm afraid it's a bad use they'd make of a gun like that."

"There's very few men in the parish knows I have it, and there wouldn't be that few itself only that I had to trust my things to them to keep for me the time I was in gaol."

But intercourse with Rafferty was almost the only pleasant thing in Stephen's life during the three weeks which followed his return home. As the League tightened its grip upon the people they became less and less inclined to be friendly with him or to listen to what he said to them. Mr. Manders became more than ever aggressive, and determined to carry things with a high hand in the face of any opposition. Mr. Hegarty seemed frightened and puzzled. He became, as the trouble darkened over the country, entirely absorbed in his mystical religion, and turned his eyes away from what was happening round about him. Mrs. Hegarty complained petulantly. She viewed the Land League and its doings with great dislike, because she thought it would drive the gentry out of the country and render

Dhulough a duller place than ever to live in. Lord Daintree stayed in London. Dean Ponsonby never let slip an opportunity of impressing upon Stephen his belief that the whole agitation was the result of the Home Rule movement, and that Stephen himself, by his nationalism, was endangering the lives of all the decent people in the community. Father Staunton was still obliged to stay in bed, and was seldom able to receive visitors.

There was much talk of strong measures to be taken by the Government for the suppression of the League and the restoration of law and order. The task of governing Ireland, never at the best of times very pleasant for an Englishman unless he has a strong sense of humour and no conscience, was in those days a most hateful one. To restore order it seemed absolutely necessary to ignore law. To stand by the law and maintain the ordinary constitutional safeguards of individual freedom would have meant admitting the supremacy of the League as the governing power in the country.

A plan was hit upon of appointing special magistrates, endowed with peculiar powers, and sending them down to the districts where the League seemed strongest. One of these, a Major Thorne, included Dhulough and Cuslough in his jurisdiction. He was a man of immense energy, fine personal courage, and a conviction that the trouble was entirely due to the work of a few iniquitous agitators, who stirred the people up to do things they never would have done if left to their own devices. Acting on this belief, he went through his district, not unlike St. Paul in his unregenerate days, hauling men off to prison. He obtained permission to arrest any one who struck him

as ill-disposed and turbulent. Many of his victims were greatly pleased when he laid hands on them. These were men of no particular occupation and very limited means of living. They went joyfully to prison, confident that they would be well fed, comfortable, and in a fair way to acquire a profitable reputation as martyrs. Others disliked being arrested for various reasons. Some of them had comfortable homes of their own, which they preferred to prison cells; some were making money, and resented being taken away from their business. Others were really anxious to further the cause of the League, and they hated the enforced idleness of captivity. But Major Thorne, as befitted a good Englishman, was quite impartial. He shut up those who objected just as determinedly as he did those who went out of their way to get arrested.

It was not very long before Major Thorne and Mr. Manders became acquainted. Between them they planned a blow which they thought likely to seriously injure the League. Mr. Heverin, the treasurer, and, next to Father O'Sullivan, the most important man in the League at Cuslough, held a large tract of grazing land on Lord Daintree's estate. For this he resolutely refused to pay any rent. Mr. Manders knew, as indeed everybody else did, that Mr. Heverin could perfectly well pay if he liked; but Mr. Heverin did not like. It suited him very well to graze his cattle rent free on some of the best land in the district. It also suited him to boast at League meetings of his defiance of Mr. Manders and his fidelity to the cause of the people.

A blow at Mr. Heverin would certainly injure the League. Major Thorne and Mr. Manders discussed the matter carefully, and decided that they would seize Mr. Heverin's cattle.

"He has thirty of them on the land," said Mr. Manders, "as fine beasts as you'd wish to see. They are worth the rent he owes three or four times over."

"Ah!" said Major Thorne. "Then we can afford to do the thing in style. It will be no harm if we pile up the expenses a bit."

Mr. Manders chuckled.

"The beasts will fetch their price if we send them up to Dublin, but it won't come to that. Heverin will pay up at the last moment. You see if he doesn't."

"We'll have to go cautiously, or he'll have them driven off on to somebody else's land, and we won't be able to identify them. I've been tricked that way once or twice already. We'll make a surprise visit of it."

The secret was well kept. It was only on the morning when the expedition started from the barrack at Dhulough that anybody guessed what was going to happen. Then Mr. Heverin, hearing the news from a breathless messenger, bestirred himself. In a wonderfully short time the people of Cuslough and the neighbourhood were roused. A crowd, which rapidly increased in size, marched along with the attacking force of police and bailiffs, hooting and yelling. Neither Major Thorne nor Mr. Manders appeared to be frightened or even annoyed. They sat on opposite sides of their car and chatted pleasantly. They laughed frequently. The people tried to delay the march by getting in front of the horses and refusing to move. Major Thorne and Mr. Manders took the lead on their car and drove on steadily, still laughing. The progress of the force was slow, but the distance was not very great. Heverin's land was reached just as some friendly neighbours had succeeded in collecting the cattle into a mob preparatory to driving them

off the threatened farm. The bailiffs went forward and seized the animals.

Mr. Heverin himself arrived on the scene. He had driven quickly after the police, and was just in time to see his cattle captured by the bailiffs. There was a pause. The people looked at Mr. Heverin for guidance. Mr. Manders and Major Thorne consulted together.

"If he pays now," said Mr. Manders, "we'll have broken the back of the League. No man will feel himself safe if we can force Heverin to give way."

"If he doesn't pay," said Major Thorne, "I'll drive the bullocks over to Dunbeg and rail them to Dublin. I'll have them auctioned there, and Heverin will lose a pretty penny over the business before he's through with it."

Mr. Heverin, whose attitude and face were calculated to express the most heroic determination, sat on his car. He showed no sign of wavering, and made no offer to pay the rent due. The crowd cheered him enthusiastically. Major Thorne gave an order to the bailiffs. A gap was broken in the wall of the field and the cattle driven through it on to the road. The crowd hooted and groaned angrily. Major Thorne arranged his force for the march to Dunbeg. In front he placed ten policemen armed with carbines. Next came the car on which he and Mr. Manders drove. Behind it were four mounted police. Then came the whole thirty of Mr. Heverin's cattle herded by the bailiffs, guarded by more police on foot. In the rear were four more cars, each occupied by two policemen. The crowd stood in the field watching the preparations for the start. Major Thorne gave the command to march. Mr. Heverin, with a fine sense of dramatic fitness, seized the opportunity for delivering himself of a

speech. The people gathered round him eagerly. It is always pleasant to listen to a speech, and Mr. Heverin, though not naturally a first-rate orator, was likely to be moved to fine effect by the circumstances. There were about two hundred people present.

Mr. Manders leaned across the well of the car and said—

“Let us stop and hear the speech. It’s sure to be interesting.”

But Major Thorne was an Englishman, and like all Englishmen bent chiefly on doing his duty. There didn’t seem to him to be any amusement to be got out of listening to Mr. Heverin’s speech ; and it was a long way to Dunbeg. He was also not frightened, for Major Thorne was not an easy man to frighten, but a little uneasy.

“I don’t like it,” he said. “There are two hundred people there at least, and there’s a nasty look about the crowd. We’ll get on as fast as we can.”

Loud cheers were heard from the field where the crowd was gathered. It was evident that Mr. Heverin’s speech was meeting with general approval. There were more cheers and then a fierce yell. Mr. Manders and Major Thorne stood up on their car and looked over the heads of the cattle and the police at what was going on behind them. The crowd was in motion, running.

“They are after us,” said Major Thorne.

“I think not,” said Mr. Manders. “They are in the fields. They mean to pass us. I don’t see Heverin with them. He probably feels that he’s not in training for a cross-country run.”

Mr. Heverin was in fact following along the road on his car. His habits, as Mr. Manders suggested, were not those of an athlete. Besides, the prudent com-

mander keeps in the rear of the forces he sends forth to battle. The crowd gained rapidly on the police. They leaped ditches, flung down stone walls, and ran strongly across the fields. They streamed past. Mr. Manders watched them with interest.

"You wouldn't see better running than that at sports where you paid a shilling at the gate," he said.

"What the devil are they up to?" asked Major Thorne.

"I shouldn't wonder if they meant to cut us off at Knocknagoona."

"If they do," said the magistrate grimly, "I'll teach them a lesson they won't forget."

"Knocknagoona," said Mr. Manders, "is a nasty spot."

It is a very nasty spot for irregular fighting. The hill is steep, and half-way up the road bends sharply to the right. A few yards further up it bends to the left again and rises more steeply than ever. Between the two bends is a bridge across a stream, and the bridge is very narrow, not nearly so wide as the road before and behind it. Just beyond the bridge a detachment of Mr. Heverin's supporters was gathered. Some of them were armed with sticks; all of them had stones; and there were stones piled ready to hand, a reserve of ammunition, at the sides of the road. Above the bridge, commanding it across the angle of the road, were more men, and these also had piles of stones ready.

The ten policemen who marched in front halted at the sight of the crowd. Major Thorne stepped off his car and walked out in front of his men. A yell greeted his appearance, and a few stones were flung at him. He stood without speaking until the crowd stopped yelling. Then he said—

"Unless you disperse at once I shall read the Riot Act and order the police to charge."

Another yell, and more stones answered him. One of the stones knocked his hat off, and rolled it to the side of the road. There a gust of wind caught it and whirled it over the low wall into the stream below. It floated down the current. Major Thorne turned and ordered one of the constables to fetch the hat. The man scrambled down the bank, and along the edge of the stream. The current was rapid, and the hat might have escaped him altogether if it had not grounded on a submerged rock. The constable waded in and captured it. The crowd laughed and cheered derisively. Major Thorne waited bareheaded. Mr. Manders, who disliked looking ridiculous, stepped up to him.

"Never mind your hat," he said, "go on without it."

"I can't," said Major Thorne. "I have the Riot Act pasted on the lining inside, and I haven't another copy with me."

Mr. Manders cursed the hat and the Riot Act. The constable regained the road, and handed the hat to its owner. The precious document which lined it was damp but still legible. Major Thorne read it with due solemnity. He ordered the police to lay down their carbines and draw batons. Mr. Manders came up to him again.

"There's something going on on the road below," he said. "Maybe you'd better see what it is."

Mr. Heverin's supporters had apparently ceased to take any interest in Major Thorne or the Riot Act. They were gazing over the heads of the police at something which was taking place at the bottom of the hill. Major Thorne and Mr. Manders got up on the wall and looked. A car with two horsemen beside it was beginning to climb the hill.

"That," said Mr. Manders, "is Stephen Butler on the

black horse. I wish to God he'd have stayed at home. The Lord only knows what he'll do now he's here."

"The other fellow is a priest by the looks of him," said Major Thorne.

"It is. It's Father O'Sullivan. And the man on the car is Heverin. Now what the devil——"

He stopped. Stephen Butler rode forward, waving his hand. He pushed his horse through the cattle, and came up to Mr. Manders.

"It's all right!" he shouted. "Heverin will pay. He has the money with him. Come back and take it. For God's sake don't start a fight with the men in front of you!"

Mr. Manders and Major Thorne walked back towards Heverin's car. Stephen Butler rode across the bridge and began to speak to the people.

"If," said Mr. Manders, "that priest is persuading Heverin to pay up I'll eat your hat, Major, Riot Act and all."

Father O'Sullivan was certainly trying to persuade Heverin to do something. He leaned from his saddle, spoke, apparently very earnestly, and gesticulated with the whip he held in his hand.

"Well, Heverin," said Mr. Manders cheerfully, "so you've decided to pay up, like a sensible man. It's a pity you didn't do so sooner. You might have saved us a lot of trouble—not that I'm grumbling; it's a fine day for a drive—and yourself a lot of expense. I've a fine bill of costs against you now, and I shouldn't wonder if Major Thorne charged you with the damage done to his hat, including the price of a new copy of the Riot Act. However, that's your affair; and any way your friends have had a run for their money."

Mr. Heverin's hand was in his breast-pocket when Father O'Sullivan spoke.

He's not going to pay."

"Maybe there would be no harm in my asking," said Mr. Manders, "what business it is of yours whether he pays or not? I don't recognise your right to interfere in the matter one way or another."

"I've as good a right to interfere as Mr. Butler has," said the priest. "You didn't object to his trying to persuade Heverin to pay."

"Very well," said Mr. Manders. "Now, Heverin, which is it to be? Will you pay your rent now and the costs, or will you let those bullocks of yours be sent up to Dublin and sold for maybe half their value?"

Again Mr. Heverin's hand went to his breast-pocket. He looked at Mr. Manders. He looked at the police. He looked at the mob on the hill above him. He looked long at his cattle, but his eyes rested finally on the priest. Mr. Manders and the magistrate turned and walked away. Father O'Sullivan dismounted and tried to make his way to the crowd on the hill. The magistrate gave a brief order, and the police on the cars in the rear barred the way.

"I can't have that priest with the crowd," said the magistrate. "I've met men of his sort before. He's dangerous."

He walked on to the police who faced the mob with their batons in their hands. He stood in front of them again and warned the mob to disperse. A shout of defiance answered him. He turned to his men.

"Stop a minute," said Mr. Manders. "Stop! Don't give the order to charge. Don't you see that Stephen Butler is among them?"

"I don't care a damn for Stephen Butler," said Major Thorne. "He must take his chance with the rest. Now, men, steady; charge!"

The police rushed forward. Stones flew among them ; one man staggered and fell, struck on the forehead. Then they reached the crowd. Their short clubs fell with dull thuds that were audible above the noise on the arms and shoulders of the people in front of them. Stephen Butler turned his horse across the road and brandished his whip. He had a confused thought of getting somehow between the police and the people. Then the whole business was over. The police, most of them cut, all of them breathless, stood in the road. They had captured two prisoners. The rest of the crowd fled up the hill or over the stony land at the side of the road.

Mr. Manders ran forward to Stephen Butler.

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

Stephen put his hand to his cheek and withdrew it covered with blood.

"A stone must have grazed me," he said ; "but it's nothing."

Father O'Sullivan was allowed at last to pass the police who guarded the rear of the cattle. He ran up the hill.

"This is abominable," he said. "Who gave the order to charge the people? On whose authority were they beaten like dogs?"

"On mine," said Major Thorne. He was smiling in high good humour.

"It couldn't be helped," said Mr. Manders. "They were stopping the way and wouldn't disperse."

"If any life has been lost," said the priest, "or if anybody has been injured, I'll hold you responsible. I'll make you suffer for it if there's law or justice anywhere. Why didn't you let me through to the people? I'd have bidden them go home quietly. I wanted to prevent bloodshed."

"Did you?" said Major Thorne. "Then you went

a d—d queer way about it. But there isn't any life lost. Sergeant, bring forward your prisoners."

The two men were led forward.

"Give me your names," said the magistrate.

There was no answer from the men. Then Mr. Manders pointed to one of them.

"That's young Sheridan," he said. "Peter Sheridan of Gorteen."

Stephen looked at the prisoner. It was the same young man who had spoken to him in Mr. Manders' office. He seemed neither cowed nor angry now while the police held him. His eyes met Stephen's unwaveringly, but with a look of great sadness in them. Stephen was moved by strong pity for him. He understood, looking at his face, that Sheridan was sorry, not for fighting, but for having been beaten and taken. He was sorry because his companions had run away, proved themselves unequal to bearing blows.

"Release the prisoners," said the magistrate.

Sheridan stood for a moment, bewildered. Then he turned and slowly walked away with hanging head and eyes fixed on the ground. The other man mumbled a voluble stream of thanks. Major Thorne turned his back on him and spoke to Mr. Manders.

"We've lost time enough here. We'd better be getting on."

Mr. Manders looked at Stephen, who sat a little apart on his horse.

"I suppose you'll go home now, Butler; or would you like to come on with us and see the end of the fun?"

Stephen dismounted and crossed the road to Father O'Sullivan.

"Will you allow me," he said to the priest, "to ride

back with you to Dhulough? I should like to have a talk with you. I should like to see whether we cannot hit on some plan for preventing this sort of thing from happening in future." He spoke humbly as if he were asking a favour of the priest.

Mr. Manders, watching curiously, could not hear what Stephen said, but he heard Father O'Sullivan's answer.

"I don't see how any good could come out of such a discussion."

Major Thorne was already seated in his car.

"Come, Mr. Manders," he said; "climb up and let us be getting along."

"Wait a minute," said Mr. Manders.

"Surely——" said Stephen to the priest again.

Father O'Sullivan interrupted him. "Those," he said, pointing to Major Thorne and the police, "are your friends. Go and arrange with them how to prevent this sort of thing from happening again, if that's what you want. I have nothing to say to any landlord."

He spoké truculently, and all he said was plainly audible. Stephen flushed.

"I'm inclined to think," said Mr. Manders, "that Father O'Sullivan is right. You had better come with us."

"I'm not going to sit here all day," said Major Thorne. "March, men."

Mr. Manders sprang on to the car. In a few minutes the last of the police passed over the brow of the hill. Father O'Sullivan, without a glance at Stephen Butler, walked down the road. A group of twenty or thirty men had gathered round Heverin's car. Father O'Sullivan spoke a few words to them. He pointed to Stephen, who sat alone on his horse on the bridge. The people groaned. Stephen could not hear what the priest said, but he did hear distinctly the shout that followed the groan.

"Traitor! traitor!"

Again he flushed, this time angrily. He turned his horse up the hill, and rode rapidly till he overtook the police. Mr. Manders greeted him as if nothing particular had happened.

"You're quite right to come with us. You'll enjoy seeing that ugly brute Heverin pay up at the last moment. And he will, you know. Then he can take charge of his own cattle, and we'll get comfortably home to dinner."

The procession of magistrates, policemen, bailiffs, and bullocks arrived at last at Dunbeg railway station. Two trucks, ordered beforehand by Major Thorne, stood ready beside the platform. The cattle were gathered, and the task of driving them in began. Mr. Manders lit a cigar. He offered his case to Stephen and to Major Thorne. Stephen refused. He went apart from the crowd of men and cattle and stood, miserable, by himself at the end of the platform. Major Thorne also refused to smoke. He had still to see the bullocks into the train, and his men home to their barrack. Till he was through with his duty, he permitted himself no indulgence. Mr. Manders shrugged his shoulders, and, making himself as comfortable as possible on a porter's barrow, smoked with satisfaction.

Mr. Heverin appeared on the platform. Mr. Manders, without turning his head, caught sight of him out of the corner of his eye. He winked with solemn delight at Major Thorne. As each bullock was driven in, Heverin took a step forward. When the first truck was full and its doors secured, he came quite close to the truck on which Mr. Manders sat. The work of driving the bullocks into the second truck began. Mr. Heverin cleared his throat noisily. Mr. Manders

smoked impassively and winked again, this time at a police-sergeant, for Major Thorne was looking the other way. Only two bullocks remained on the platform. Mr. Heverin's hand went hastily into his breast pocket. He drew out a leather case. With trembling fingers he took from it a roll of bank-notes. Without a word he laid them on Mr. Manders' knee. The agent looked up with an expression of innocent surprise. Then he winked again, this time at Mr. Heverin.

"I suppose," he said, "Father O'Sullivan is at home by now?"

Then he counted the notes, put his hand in his pocket and drew out a stamped receipt.

"I brought this with me," he said, "because I thought you'd see reason before the day was out. The League is a very good thing, Heverin, but it would need to be better than it is before you'd lose fifty pounds for the sake of it. Good-night and safe home to you, Heverin. Come along, boys, you may leave the bullocks alone. Mr. Heverin will look after them now and drive them home himself. I hope you won't meet the boys we scattered on the way, Mr. Heverin. They might be angry with you, after getting their heads broken for them about nothing at all. Good-night, Mr. Heverin. It's a grand thing to be a reasonable man. It's better than being treasurer of a League, any day."

He rose from his barrow, threw away the end of his cigar, and walked up to Stephen.

"Did you see that?" he asked.

"It was vile," said Stephen, "abominable."

"Well, it wasn't your kind of nationalism exactly, was it? But, after all, what can you expect from fellows like that?"

CHAPTER XIX

MR. MANDERS and Stephen Butler left the railway station together. Major Thorne busied himself for a while distributing his police among the cars which were to carry them back to Cuslough and getting the mounted men into order for the march.

"You'll dine with me to-night, Butler," said Mr. Manders. "I'm asking the gallant Major, too. He's sure to spread himself out largely in the course of the evening about his performance to-day. I expect it will be great fun listening to him."

But Stephen did not want to be amused. He declined the invitation and rode off by himself. He preferred to spend his evening alone at Dhulough House. Mr. Manders approached the magistrate.

"Major Thorne, I shall be very glad if you'll dine with me this evening. Don't bother about dressing if your clothes are somewhere else. There are no ladies, and I can give you a wash."

"Sorry," said the Major; "I can't possibly. I should like to, but I've got a lot of writing to get through this evening. I'll send the car on with you from Cuslough."

Mr. Manders was vexed.

"Hang it all," he muttered. "Why should everybody take life so seriously? Heverin and his bullocks are nuisance enough in the daytime. They ought not to be allowed to spoil our evenings as well."

The news of Heverin's surrender reached Cuslough

before the police did. It was received with great excitement, and spread rapidly to every cottage in the neighbourhood. The people crowded into the village as if for a fair. The shaggy ponies on which they rode were tethered in every back yard. When the yards and stables were full they were left standing forlornly in the gutters of the street. Men crowded the rooms in which the League committee met and gathered round Heverin's door. When the police marched in the street was thronged with people, and groups of men were discussing the situation excitedly. It was generally felt that Heverin's surrender was likely to injure seriously the power and prestige of the League. Fiery spirits counselled prompt and immediate vengeance on the coward. There was talk of breaking the windows of his house at once, and even of setting fire to it. But the people were by no means unanimous. There were those who had good reason to recollect the fact that he was banker to the community. Popular disapproval expressed by window-breaking and such demonstrations might have the effect of goading Heverin to extreme measures against those who were completely in his power. It was difficult, though evidently not impossible, for the law to make men pay a landlord what he claimed as his due. It was still to be proved what forces a moneylender could call to his aid in an hour of need.

"Sure we all know," said the supporters of Heverin, "that he's a good friend to the League. Wasn't it himself that put down five pounds for a subscription, and who else gave the half of it?"

"Devil the one deserves better of the League than he does. If it isn't Father O'Sullivan himself, where would you get the equal of Mr. Heverin?"

"And what would you have the man do? Was he to see his beasts sent off to Dublin in the train, and him with money in his pocket to pay the trifle that was owing on the land?"

So these men spoke, hoping for advances of money from Mr. Heverin's purse, advances which they sorely needed for the purchase of seed potatoes; or dreading the calling in of debts long due. While the wrangle between the two parties dragged along, Heverin himself drove into the village. He looked neither to right or left, greeted no man, but went straight to his house. He entered it, shut the door behind him, and almost immediately closed and barred the shutters of the windows on the ground floor. His appearance quickened the temper of the crowd. What had been a wrangle before now became a debate. Angry words were spoken; voices were raised; there were threats and even scuffles. The police emerged from the barrack and patrolled the street in couples. A quiet evening and a good night's rest were certainly due to them after their long day's work, but it seemed most unlikely that they would get them. All day they had been occupied in protecting Heverin's bullocks from Heverin's friends. Now they were to protect Heverin's friends from each other. Later on, very probably, they would be employed in protecting Heverin himself from his friends.

The crowd in the street grew larger as fresh people streamed into the village, and its temper got more excitable. Major Thorne, from his office in the barrack, ordered out more police. The inspector, with his sword in its shiny scabbard, paraded the street anxiously as the evening darkened. It began to rain. He went into the barrack and reported the fact to Major Thorne.

"The people will disperse," said the magistrate, "when the rain gets heavy."

He was a well-read man, and as befitted one of his profession he took an interest in the history of popular demonstrations. He knew that in Paris, in London, and elsewhere, rain is a much more effective preventer of riot than any police force.

"I don't think they will, sir," said the inspector.

He was a young man, and was not nearly so well read as Major Thorne. But he had the advantage of several years' experience of Irish crowds.

It turned out that the inspector was right, although it rained heavily enough to justify any crowd in postponing a demonstration. The wind which had blown gustily earlier in the day, playing tricks with hats and Riot Acts, died completely away. A heavy downpour of rain descended quietly and persistently. The police officer eyed it through the window of the barrack and, since he knew that it would not disperse the crowd, disliked the look of it very much. It seemed certain that his shiny scabbard and spurs would require much polishing in the morning, and he feared that his pretty uniform would be spoiled. He shrugged his shoulders and went out again. His men had donned grey capes, and marched dripping up and down the street. The crowd took almost no notice of the rain. One man here and another there turned up the collar of a frieze overcoat, or slouched the brim of a soft felt hat, so that the rain ran off it instead of lying like water in the moat of a castle round the head of the wearer. But most of the people had no overcoats. Drops of rain glistened on the rough texture of their jackets, and their faces shone with moisture when they stood within range of a lighted window. The only creatures, with

the exception of the police officer, whom the rain made uneasy, were the ponies, condemned to stand in the gutters. They turned this way and that, trying to discover the direction from which the rain blew, so that they could turn their backs to it. But there was no wind at all, so after a while they gave up the attempt and stood with stooped heads and arched shoulders, apathetic, motionless, save when some passer-by, pressed for room, struck a shaggy flank with his stick, or pushed against lean ribs to gain space for walking.

Suddenly the debating of the various groups of men ceased. All heads were turned in one direction. The police stopped their patient tramping and faced round towards the top of the village street. Father O'Sullivan drove in along the road from Dhulough, gave over his horse and trap to the care of his servant and walked rapidly to the League rooms. A feeling of tense excitement and nervousness was general. Groups broke up, and men moved quickly here and there among the people. The single light which burned in an upper window of Heverin's house was extinguished. The police straightened themselves, shook the rain from their capes and stamped warmth into their feet, making muddy puddles of the ground on which they stood. Every one expected that something would happen. The leader, the man with power other than the power of muscular arms or heavy batons, was present. The growling discontent of the crowd, the fierceness, the timidity, the anger and the prudence would be gathered and welded into a force; a force that would——To what end would Father O'Sullivan direct the force at his command?

The police officer, wet now so that further wetting made little difference to him, entered the barrack. He

found Major Thorne seated at a table writing diligently by the light of an ineffective oil lamp.

"I think it right to report to you, sir, that the priest, Father O'Sullivan of Dhulough, has just driven into the village and entered the rooms of the League."

Major Thorne pushed away his papers.

"Father O'Sullivan, you say. Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, sir. I know him well."

"Good," said Major Thorne.

He walked sharply across the room and then back to his chair. He took a fresh piece of paper, hesitated, paced the room again, and then wrote a note rapidly. He handed it to the inspector with an order.

"Dispatch a mounted man at once with this note to Mr. Manders."

A sergeant entered the room, saluted and said—

"A young man is going to and fro through the crowd, sir, summoning the members of the League committee to meet Father O'Sullivan. The rest of the people have been turned out of the committee room."

"Thank you, Sergeant. That will do. Or stay. Do you know who the man is—the messenger?"

"He's a boy by the name of Sheridan, sir; the son of a man that was evicted on the Snell estate."

"Sheridan, Sheridan—let me see. You were with us this afternoon, Sergeant. Is he one of the two men we took at Knocknagoona?"

"He is, sir."

"The one who didn't say thank you when I released him?"

"The same man, sir."

"Thank you, Sergeant. That will do."

He turned to the inspector when the sergeant left the room—

"You will have sufficient men ready at the top of the street to protect Mr. Manders from any annoyance when he comes into the village, but make no arrests if you can help it. Later on there will probably be speeches. The priest will make a speech, I expect. You will stand as near him as you can and make careful notes of what he says. Have a couple of intelligent and reliable men with you. I want to know exactly what is said, and I want two or three reports made independently. You understand?"

The officer bowed and withdrew. The crowd outside gathered round the committee rooms of the League. There was no longer any sign of disputing or wrangling among the people. They were waiting. It was evident that the police would not be called upon to interrupt the fighting of individuals or to put a stop to any kind of indiscriminate rioting. Their duty, if they were to have any duty to do, would be to stop some organised movement. It was now quite dark. The people, staring through the window, watched the figures of the men inside the committee room. Father O'Sullivan sat at the head of the table with the lamplight shining full on his face. The watchers noticed the strong set of his jaws, the look of determination in his eyes, the clenched hands on the table before him. There was not a man there who did not feel that he could trust Father O'Sullivan without fear of being deserted or betrayed. There were very few who did not feel also that it would be an unpleasant thing to find themselves in opposition to the priest. More than one man was uneasily conscious that it might be almost equally unpleasant to have to obey Father O'Sullivan in his present mood.

One member after another rose to speak. The crowd

outside gathered closer to the window. Faces were pressed, and noses flattened, against the panes. Then Father O'Sullivan said something. The man who sat next him got up and closed the shutters. The pressure of the crowd round the window grew less when it was no longer possible to see anything. Here and there a man detached himself and went down the street. At a word from the police officer two constables followed them. They were young men, and they talked eagerly together. After a while they separated and disappeared into different houses and yards. Soon, two of them came out again carrying an empty tar barrel. Others joined these with creels of turf on their shoulders. One carried an oil can in his hand. They approached the crowd which still stood before the League rooms. It became evident that they meant to build and light a fire. The crowd parted, leaving a large vacant space in the middle of the street. The police officer gave an order, and a body of his men stepped into the space with the intention of preventing the building of the fire. The officer himself went again to the barrack. The young men with the barrel and the turf stood still. They understood that the police officer had gone for orders. They were content to wait and see what the orders would be.

Major Thorne was still writing. He was making out warrants for the arrest of certain individuals as suspected persons, dangerous to Her Majesty's peace and the security of the realm. He listened to the officer's report.

"Let the men build their fire if they like," he said. "I don't see what harm that can do, so long as it doesn't set a light to Heverin's house. They'll make it easier for you to use your notebooks when the speeches begin."

The officer returned to the crowd, and withdrew the police from the space which had been cleared. The men with the tar barrel and the turf walked quietly into the middle of the street and began building their fire. They worked skilfully and quickly. Since their ancestors worshipped the sun the fathers and grandfathers of these men have built great fires on St. John's Eve. It is small wonder that their descendants have some skill in such architecture now. Other peoples make fires occasionally, intermittently, to celebrate victories or coronations, to announce invasions, to consume heretics, wicked books, vanities, and other noxious things. No people, except the Connacht peasants, have built fires regularly—annually. Therefore a fire in Connacht can be built more swiftly and mightily than elsewhere; and can be made to light even when it rains.

Once built, eager men crowded round it. Frieze coats, and even small grey jackets, were stripped off and spread over the turf to keep off the rain. Rheumatism is a remote evil; the failure of a bonfire on a wet night is a horribly pressing possibility. Besides, every one was already soaked to the skin, whereas the turf, so far, was no more than damp. Then, the blaze being properly provided for, the crowd moved away again. Beside the fire stood only the man with the oil can in his hand, and three assistants ready to strip the coverings from the turf when the great moment arrived.

The flash of lamps was seen, though dimly, because of the downpour of rain, and soon the noise of fast driving down the road towards the village became audible. The police officer called some of his men to him. He felt sure that Mr. Manders was coming in response to the magistrate's summons. It was clearly

impossible to drive a horse through the crowd which waited round the bonfire. He and his men went to meet the trap, and stopped it at the entrance of the village.

"You are Mr. Manders, I suppose," said the inspector, trying to peer into the darkness which lay beyond the two glowing lamps of the trap.

"That's my name," said the agent. "Maybe you'll be so good as to tell me what in the name of all that's holy you're doing there with that enormous crowd of policemen!"

"I'm here to conduct you safely to the barrack, but you'll have to get out and walk the rest of the way. There is a big crowd in the street."

"I can see that," said Mr. Manders. He got out of the trap and shook himself. "Tom, you can take the mare home. This'll be an all-night job, I expect. And now, sir, if you and your men will stand out of the way, I'll go on."

"You can't go by yourself. It wouldn't be safe."

"Oh, wouldn't it? I'm prepared to risk that. There's not a man would lay a hand on me in the open. The blackguards daren't, if they wanted to ever so much, and I don't believe the most of them do."

The inspector and his men closed round Mr. Manders.

"My orders," he said.

"Oh, orders! I suppose that settles it. Come and let's make an absurd procession of ourselves if we must. Why the devil Major Thorne is so fond of doing things in perfectly ridiculous ways beats me!"

Just as Mr. Manders and the police reached the crowd, the window of the room immediately above that in which the committee sat, became light. The figures

of Father O'Sullivan and one or two other members of the committee were seen. The crowd cheered loudly. Mr. Manders and the policemen passed close to the house on the opposite side of the street without attracting attention. The watchers beside the bonfire pulled the covering-coats off the turf and flung them aside. Oil was poured from the can ; a match was struck, and in a moment the whole street was lit by a blaze. ' The crowd cheered more frantically than ever.

"Go on to the barracks," shouted the officer in Mr. Manders' ear. "You're safe now. I must stay here."

The window of the room in which the light had appeared was flung open from the bottom. The crowd cheered again and again. More oil was flung on the fire, and the blaze leaped higher. The turf and the tar barrel caught fire. Sparks flew up through the rain. The faces of the crowd became plainly visible—lean, haggard faces, but lit now with fierce excitement. These were the same men who, a little while before, had stood apathetic and hopeless in the field beyond Cuslough, while the Member of Parliament and Mr. Heverin made speeches to them. They were not apathetic now. They had discovered that they possessed power, a power which had already successfully defied the law and rendered impotent the ancient force of the aristocracy before which they and their fathers had bowed in submissive helplessness for centuries. But no one looked at their faces, their lean frames, or the soaked ragged clothes that hung round them. Their eyes and the eyes of the spectator police beside them, were fixed on the figure and face of the priest, who stood framed in the open window with light behind him and the brighter light of the fire glowing and flashing on him from the street. He stood in the centre of light, not

daylight, but wild, lawless light—light which resembled the passions of the men below him. He was fitly placed above them, fitly illuminated by the flames of their fire. It was he who had roused in them hope and courage, and with these had awakened long-slumbering lusts of revenge and hate and greed. It was to him they looked now at the critical moment when their cause had been betrayed, and a base submission made by a man they trusted.

Father O'Sullivan raised his hand and the cheering stopped. There was silence, so that the rush of the flames could be plainly heard, and even the dull, heavy dropping of the rain on the drenched thatch of the roofs and the drenched clothing of the crowd.

"Men," he began, "what are you going to do? You have heard what happened to-day. The man we trusted, whom you trusted, whom I trusted—and may God forgive me for not knowing better—the man whom you elected to a post of honour, making him your treasurer, this man has betrayed us. I care not under what provocation or fearing what danger the betrayal was made. He did it! That is enough. And yet it is right to say that his deed is worse than such a deed would have been if one of you had done it. You or I might have been cowards. He was not only a coward, but a traitor."

A fierce groan and a storm of hissing burst from the crowd. Then suddenly there was silence again.

"For what did he do? He paid the rent demanded of him—the tyrannous impost of the landlords who have ground our bodies into the dust for generations. Well, a man might pay who was threatened with eviction, who saw before him a vision of his children starving on the roadside and his wife desolate. Such a man might

pay, and we should call him a coward ; but we should pity him. But this man, this Heverin, what risk did he run ? Was his home to be taken from him ? Was his wife to starve ? Was he to be forced into the workhouse or the gaol ? No ! but he was to lose a pound, ten pounds, twenty pounds ; paltry money, dirty money, money with a curse on it ; and for the sake of the money he did what some of you refused to do at the risk of the lives and honour of your families. Therefore I say he is not only a coward, but a traitor too."

"Shoot him !" shrieked a voice from the crowd, and a cheer followed.

"Wait. Who is this traitor ? There are those among us who have refused to join our ranks, who prefer the old bondage, who pay what is asked of them. We reckon them poor-spirited, miserable men, who dare not strike a blow for liberty. But we can have some respect for them. At least, we know who they are and what they are. But this man ! This Heverin ! It was he who talked loudest of the justice of our cause. It was he who presided at our first meeting. It was he who, this very day, urged you to fight for him, brought you into danger from which I was too late to save you. It is he, this Heverin, who is the first of all to betray you. What is to be said for him ?"

This time not one voice but many yelled, "Shoot him !" "Captain Moonlight !" "An ounce of honest lead !" and each suggestion was met with cheers.

"No." Father O'Sullivan's voice rang out clear above the tumult. "No, no, and a thousand times No ! Miserable men, would you break the law of God ? No ; but I will tell you what to do."

The police officer nodded to the two men who stood beside him. It was clear that the crisis of the speech

had arrived. He and his subordinates drew pencils and notebooks from their pockets. Great drops of rain blotted the paper. The pencils moved stickily, making deep black marks on the damp surface, or rushed forward leaving fainter tracks on the dry spots. Here and there they pierced and tore the paper. But the writing went on. Father O'Sullivan, turning slightly, let his eyes rest upon these writers.

"I see the police listening to me," he said. "Taking down my words. You police! You came of the people, and you ought to be with the people in their struggle. But what are you? You are renegade curs, hired assassins of the tyranny which you call the Government. I know you, but I do not fear you. I know the man who placed you where you are, the man, the stranger, who has come among us with the heart of a Herod in his breast. He waits for you and your report in the barrack beyond there. He waits. Let him wait. I neither respect nor fear him. I defy him and his lawless power. I defy him to arrest me, handcuff me, hang me if he dares. But he dare not. With his spies listening I will tell you what to do and how to deal with the traitor. Don't touch him. Don't speak to him. Don't answer him. Don't buy from him or sell to him. Let him eat the flesh of the bullocks he has saved, and grow fat on it if he can. But let him herd them himself, kill them himself, flay them himself, roast and boil them for himself. Let him drink the whisky with which his den is stored, but let no man send so much as a boy to draw a can of water for him from the well. Let the grass grow up to the doorstep of his house before a foot except his own presses it. Let the walls of his house totter, let the roof of his house fall before a hand is stretched

out to shore them up for him. This is what you have to do. Do it thoroughly."

He turned to the police again.

"Have you written down what I have said? Well, take it to your master who waits for you in the barrack. Take it, take the very words I used. Shall I say them over again for you? Take them, and tell him this from me, that I have not broken or counselled other men to break even the vile tyranny which he calls law. Tell him to point out if he can even in the old code of the penal days one statute which compels, I say compels, an honest man to have traffic with traitors. If he can find any such law I shall walk into his prison of my own free will and hold my hands out for his iron fetters. And now, men, go home. There is no more to do or say to-night."

The police officer turned on his heel and walked back to the barrack with his notebook in his hand. The crowd, watched by the constables, kicked the remains of the bonfire to pieces and trampled the glowing fragments into the mud. Then, some on foot, some on the patient ponies, they set off home. Most of the tired policemen were allowed to lie down in the barrack. Father O'Sullivan, dismissing the committee, walked up and down the street to satisfy himself that the people were really going home. He noticed as he passed that a light burned in the upper room of the barrack. Major Thorne sat there, working at his warrants and his reports.

CHAPTER XX

MR. MANDERS sat smoking beside the fire in the office of the police barrack while Major Thorne worked at the pile of papers on the table before him. Now and then a sergeant entered the room bringing news that the street of the village was clearing and the people going quietly home. At last word came that Father O'Sullivan had also gone home, taking the last member of the committee with him. Mr. Manders knocked the ashes out of the bowl of his pipe into a grate already littered with the remains of the tobacco he had consumed since he entered the room.

"Well," he said, "that's over. I suppose you don't want me any more to-night? I'm glad there was no row."

"A great deal can be done by vigour and determination," said Major Thorne.

He was particularly pleased with the result of the arrangements he had made for dealing with the crowd. Mr. Manders looked at him out of the corners of his eyes. Major Thorne was an Englishman, and Englishmen invariably afforded Mr. Manders a good deal of amusement. He did his best to help the magistrate to be funny.

"Your display of force overawed the crowd," he said.

Major Thorne smiled complacently. He was quite sure that he had overawed the crowd.

"Do you know," went on Mr. Manders, "I think you

ought to write a note of grateful acknowledgment of the value of his services to Father O'Sullivan?"

"I have a note of another sort for the priest, a note he'll not relish when he gets it at about five o'clock this morning."

Mr. Manders turned his head quickly.

"What do you mean?" he said.

"Merely that I have a warrant for his arrest, made out a week ago at the Castle, and I've got an excellent opportunity for executing it now."

"You're surely not going to arrest Father O'Sullivan?"

"Yes, I am, and every member of his committee with him."

Mr. Manders had himself more than once spoken of the advisability of making a clean sweep of the League committee, of putting the whole lot of them, with the priest at their head, safely into gaol. But he had never dreamed of any one actually doing such a thing. It is a pleasure to most men to talk at large about what ought to be done so long as no one shows any intention of doing it. Thus several people have said that the best solution of the Irish question would be the submersion of the island in the Atlantic; but if the American syndicate who supplies the world with earthquakes were to put in an estimate for shaking Ireland into little bits and drowning all the inhabitants, the fiercest of these politicians would cast his vote against the scheme. There are also men of science who advocate the control of all marriages in the interests of posterity by a board of properly qualified medical men. Their proposal is not at present within the range of the most radical Government's activities; so they and their friends argue comfortably about its reasonable-

ness. But if the British Nonconformist, tired of wrangling about the best way to teach other people's religion to the children, were to take the marriage question up, these same scientists would be found proclaiming the sanctity of human freedom and the indefeasible right of every man to marry a consumptive woman if he chooses. So Mr. Manders, having from time to time aired an opinion that Father O'Sullivan ought to be in prison and perhaps hanged, felt outraged when a migratory Englishman not only agreed with him, but proposed to give effect to his wishes.

"But, damn it all, man, what will you arrest Father O'Sullivan for?"

"He is, in my opinion, a danger to the public peace."

"Good Lord!" said Mr. Manders. "Excuse my speaking plainly, but that's skittles, you know—infernal skittles. Why, only for Father O'Sullivan there would have been murder done in Cuslough to-night. That crowd would have had out Heverin and shot him as easy as you'd drink a pint of porter. You couldn't have stopped them. You can't seriously suppose that you and your police kept that crowd in order? If Father O'Sullivan had given the word, they'd have run your little lot into the barrack in ten minutes. Then half a dozen of them would have broken open the door of Heverin's house and made a public example of him."

"I have here," said Major Thorne, "a report of Father O'Sullivan's speech. It is a most violent speech. He deliberately incites people to boycott Heverin."

"And a jolly good job if they do," said Mr. Manders. "I wouldn't walk across the street to save Heverin if

they wanted to crucify him with his head down. No decent man would help Heverin. Boycotting is too good for the like of him. If that's all you have against the priest, you'd better put your warrant into the fire. Besides, damn it all, you're acting illegally. You can't arrest a man on a charge like that."

Major Thorne, with a smile of conscious superiority, handed a document across the table to Mr. Manders. It was a warrant regularly made out and countersigned in Dublin Castle for the arrest of the Rev. Michael O'Sullivan, curate of Dhulough.

"I made up my mind about this matter a week ago," said Major Thorne. "I went up to Dublin and talked the business over. I am determined to maintain the majesty of the law."

"Well, all I can say is, that if you arrest Father O'Sullivan, there'll be no law left in the place at all, so it won't be worth while bothering yourself about its majesty. I tell you there's just that priest between us and wholesale murder this minute. Was it to help you in this job that you sent for me to-night?"

"Certainly. My orders are to co-operate as far as possible with the local magistrates. I understood that you were a loyal man, and a man of determination and courage, so I sent for you."

It struck Mr. Manders that this particular Englishman had ceased to be amusing. The best of jokes can be carried too far, and an air of dictatorship, amusing enough in itself, becomes a source of anxiety when the man who assumes it begins to believe in himself too seriously.

"Have you consulted Mr. Butler?" he asked.

"No; and I don't mean to. Mr. Butler is a nationalist politician and a disloyal man. If I have any

dealings with Mr. Butler it will be to issue a warrant for his arrest."

"Mr. Butler is a magistrate for the county, the owner of a large estate and a Member of Parliament. Your instructions are to co-operate with the local magistrates. I insist on your doing so."

Major Thorne turned to the table without a word. He wrote a note and then rang the small bell which stood beside him. Mr. Manders returned to his seat at the hearth and piled more turf upon the fire. A sergeant entered the room.

"Sergeant," said Major Thorne, "you will dispatch a mounted man at once to Dhulough House with this note for Mr. Butler."

"And Sergeant," said Mr. Manders, as the man turned to leave the room, "if there is such a thing in the house as a kettle with a drop of water in it you might send it up here to me. I have my flask with me, thank God, and a drop of whisky in it. Send a tumbler too, and a bowl of sugar and a lemon, if you have one. Of course I don't make a point of the lemon. Here, wait a minute; you'd better send two tumblers when you're at it."

The man left the room grinning. Mr. Manders glanced at Major Thorne and observed that he was not grinning but scowling.

"You needn't have asked for two tumblers," said Major Thorne. "I don't propose to spend the night drinking. I've work to do."

"Of course you have," said Mr. Manders. "I never thought of offering you a drop. The second tumbler was for Stephen Butler. A man like you with the Lord Lieutenant and the whole blessed Government in his pocket wouldn't be seen drinking whisky and water in

a police barrack with the like of me, whether it had the squeeze of a lemon in it or not."

An obliging constable brought up a kettle, a bowl of sugar, and the two tumblers. Mr. Manders brewed himself some punch. Then Major Thorne rang again and sent for the police inspector. That unfortunate young man, after drying himself very imperfectly before the fire in the men's room, had dropped off into an uneasy doze on a straight-backed wooden chair. He eyed Mr. Manders' punch enviously, but was allowed no opportunity of receiving an invitation to drink some of it.

"You will have ten parties of men ready at 4 a.m.," said Major Thorne. "There will be three men in each party in charge of a sergeant or a reliable man. I shall hand a warrant to the commander of each party. He will then proceed with his men to the residence of the person named in the warrant and make the arrest. The prisoners will all be marched to the Dhulough police barrack, not back here you will observe, and confined there."

"So," said Mr. Manders, "you're going to make a clean sweep of the whole boiling. Twelve of them there were. The priest, I suppose, you mean to reserve for your own bag. It's quite like the apostles over again, only turned inside out. Judas, I mean to say Heverin, in this case isn't a devil, but the respectable law-abiding citizen whom we're all going to protect."

Major Thorne took no notice of the remark.

"I shall expect," he said, addressing the inspector, "to have all the prisoners lodged in Dhulough Barrack by six o'clock. You will also have eight mounted men, under your own command, ready at five o'clock. I shall accompany that party myself."

The officer left the room. Mr. Manders and Major Thorne sat in silence, which was broken only by a curious wheezing noise made by Mr. Manders' pipe, and an occasional word of reproach which he addressed to it for not drawing properly. Shortly before three o'clock Stephen Butler drove up to the door of the barrack and was shown into the office.

"I am sure you're annoyed with us for routing you out of bed," said Mr. Manders.

"I wasn't in bed," said Stephen. "I was sitting up in the library. I came on as soon as I could get the groom awakened."

He spoke wearily. Mr. Manders, glancing at him keenly, noticed that he looked fagged and miserable.

"What kept you up till this hour?"

"There was no use going to bed," said Stephen. "I couldn't have slept if I had."

Major Thorne seemed uninterested in the condition of Stephen's nerves, and impatient to get at his business.

"I sent for you, Mr. Butler, to tell you——"

"To consult you," corrected Mr. Manders.

"To tell you," repeated Major Thorne, "that I intend to arrest Father O'Sullivan and the Committee of the local branch of the League."

"What on earth for?" asked Stephen. "What has Father O'Sullivan done?"

"The best thing for you to do is to read the report of to-night's proceedings, and the notes of Father O'Sullivan's speech, which I have prepared to send up to the Castle."

"You needn't wade through that rigmarole," said Mr. Manders. "I can give you the gist of the whole thing in one sentence. Father O'Sullivan recommended

the people to boycott Heverin. I should say myself that he deserves well of the Government."

"To boycott Heverin!" said Stephen. "But surely Heverin is——"

"Heverin," said Mr. Manders slowly, "is the most unmitigated scoundrel west of the Shannon, and richly deserves whatever he gets."

"I'm not concerned with Heverin's character," said Major Thorne. "I'm here to see that the law is obeyed and order maintained."

"What law?" asked Stephen.

"There's no use arguing technical points," said the magistrate. "There's the warrant. You'll see it's properly signed and in order. Are you, as a magistrate, prepared to assist me in executing it?"

"Certainly not. I regard your action as an unwarrantable interference with the liberty of the subject. I shall complain of it from my place in Parliament."

The magistrate smiled. He did not much fear the parliamentary eloquence of a Nationalist member. Mr. Manders rose and yawned.

"As I don't intend to assist either, I may as well be toddling off home to my little bed. I don't take my friend Mr. Butler's high ground in this matter. I don't care a tinker's curse about the liberty of the subject or anything of that sort. But I tell you plainly that if you arrest Father O'Sullivan, there'll be trouble. He's the head and front of this infernal League business, and the whole conspiracy against paying rent. But he's running the thing here without actual bloodshed, so far. I am of opinion that when he's gone there'll be nobody to stop the boys from beginning to shoot in earnest. Good-night, gentlemen."

"Stop a minute," said Stephen. "Will you drive

back with me to the presbytery and warn Father O'Sullivan?"

"I shall not permit you to do that," said the magistrate to Mr. Manders.

"Ah, well, I shouldn't have done it even if you'd wanted me to. It would be rather too funny a position for the local land agent to be aiding and abetting the leader of the League in an escape from the police. Good-night again, gentlemen."

"Then," said Stephen, after Mr. Manders had left the room, "I shall go and warn him myself."

"I am sorry," said Major Thorne, "that I cannot allow that. You must not leave the barrack until I do."

Stephen flushed and then grew suddenly pale. Major Thorne expected a violent outburst. He rose from his chair and stood rigid, like a soldier at attention. Stephen, with clenched teeth and lips pressed tight together, turned and walked across the room to the window. He stared out into the darkness. The rain could be seen pouring steadily down through the belts of light which stretched across the road from the barrack windows. Now and then Stephen's horse and trap, driven slowly up and down the road, passed into the lighted space and out into the dark again. Nothing else was to be seen. For fully five minutes Stephen stood motionless. Then he turned. His face was quite white. His eyes were fixed in a stare. He walked over to Major Thorne and held out his hands.

"You had better handcuff me," he said, "and put me into one of the cells where you keep your prisoners."

Major Thorne looked at him curiously. Stephen was a young man, from the point of view of Major Thorne a mere boy. He was also an Irishman. Major Thorne remembered the lines which one of his own poets had

written about the "blind hysterics of the Celt." He bethought himself that he was a member of a superior race, that he owed patience to the temper of a boy, and indulgence to the tragedy airs of an Irishman. He spoke with the utmost kindness—

"Sit down by the fire, Mr. Butler. I won't keep you very long, and, of course, if you give me your word not to go to Father O'Sullivan, you are at liberty to go home at once."

Stephen hesitated for an instant. He might give the promise asked of him and sneak home like a whipped schoolboy. He might assault Major Thorne. The one course seemed contemptible, the other ridiculous. He sat down and waited. It seemed the only thing to do. Major Thorne was not wholly wanting in tact. He understood that conversation under the circumstances would be difficult and unpleasant.

"You will excuse me, I am sure," he said, "if I go on with some writing which I want to get finished."

His pen travelled rapidly over page after page of blue foolscap paper. It is not given to every official to capture a whole Land League committee in one sweep of his net. He was determined that his exploit should not escape the notice of the Government for want of being properly reported. Stephen sat still. His mind worked in a dull, weary manner over the problem which earlier in the night had kept him feverishly sleepless in the library at Dhulough House. He admitted the justice of the tenants' claims. He loathed the methods by which the claims were supported. He was by tradition and personal conviction a Nationalist. He saw in the agrarian agitation an obscuring of the national ideal. It seemed to him that the miserable history of ancient times was being repeated, that Irish-

man was being pitted against Irishman, and that the strife could only end, as such strife always had ended, in the grip of the foreigner upon the country tightening, tightening to the point of strangulation. He was an idealist; and here was a struggle in which both sides sought material gain. He hated the arbitrary powers conferred upon men like Major Thorne. Father O'Sullivan had refused to speak to him on the roadside; but he recognised the injustice of arresting the priest. The members of the Land League committee disliked him, and the people who followed the League's teaching distrusted him; but he did not think that the League ought to be broken by the use of arbitrary power. He bitterly resented the magistrate's interference with his own liberty; but he saw no effective way of asserting himself.

His troubled reverie was interrupted at last. The police officer entered the room.

"It's four o'clock, sir, and the men are ready to start as you ordered."

"Very well," said Major Thorne. "Here are the warrants. Or stay, perhaps I had better go and give them to the men myself."

He went down to the door of the barrack. Stephen rose and crossed the room to the window. It was still almost dark, and a constable followed the magistrate with a lantern so that he could read the names on the papers in his hand. But the faint light which was spreading in the east enabled Stephen to see the tall figures of the men in their grey capes and helmets, with carbines in their hands. The rain had ceased, but the road was wet and patched over with broad pools which caught and reflected the light from the barrack windows and the glimmer of the lantern which

the constable carried about. One by one the little parties received their orders and tramped off in one direction or the other. Stephen watched the dark forms grow dimmer and disappear into the gloom. He understood what they were going to do. Lonely farm-houses would be approached along muddy, almost impassable bohireens. Dogs roused from their sleep would bark furiously. Sleepers would turn in their beds and then sleep again. Perhaps here or there a voice would cry to the animals—

“Lie down, Shep. Be quiet, and bad luck to you.”

Or a child would wake, cry, and be comforted, or some frightened woman would lie wide-eyed in the dark, listening for the next sound. And the next sound would come: audible footsteps round the house, low words spoken, a command given; then the heavy knocking on the door. Sleepers would wake in earnest now. The master of the house, dazed, oppressed with vague doubt and dread, would get up. There would be more knocking, questioning through windows, the answers; a silence of amazement and then women's crying. There would be more knocking still. At last the door would be opened. Perhaps there would be an inspection of the warrant. The paper sloped eastward to catch the growing light. Perhaps there would be low-growled threats of resistance from grown sons or farm-servants; handling of carbines by the police, loosening of batons in their cases. Certainly there would be much crying of women, crying mingled with shrill curses. The man of the house would make a hurried toilet. The procession would move down the now plainly visible bohireen, the police with their prisoner among them. Other little bodies of men would be sighted along the road; other police with

other prisoners, all of them making for the barrack at Dhulough. In the houses left behind there would be wailing and rocking to and fro for a while. Then, since day was coming with duties not to be neglected, fires would be lit and kettles boiled. The cattle would low for their milkers, knowing nothing nor caring. The dogs, wiser than their charges, would wander disconsolately round house and yard with drooping tails. Stephen saw such scenes, many of them, as he stood watching the last of the police pass out of sight.

"What will be the end of it all?" he said. "How long must this go on? How much more of it will the people stand?"

He did not hear Major Thorne re-entering the room. For some time he stood gazing out into the gloom. When at last he turned he found that the lamp on the table had gone out, leaving an abominable smell behind it. The magistrate had lit a candle, standing it in a little patch of its own grease on a corner of the table. He was working again on a report of his proceedings which he meant to forward to the Castle. The fire was dead in the grate. Its fallen ashes lay among the debris of Mr. Manders' smoked-out pipes. The two tumblers, one still clean, the other dim and sticky, stood on the chimney-piece. The light of dawn began to make its way through the window. Stephen shivered.

The magistrate looked up from his papers as Stephen crossed the room. His face showed signs of the severe strain he had been through. The lines on it seemed deepened. The eyes were sunk far below the sharp ridge of his eyebrows.

"I presume," said Stephen, "that you have no objection to my accompanying you when you go to arrest Father O'Sullivan?"

"None in the world. Let me see. It's after four o'clock, nearly half-past. We shall start in half an hour. I want to get the business over before the people are up and about. I shall stop writing now. I must shave and have a wash before I go out."

He passed his hand over his chin. A thick stubble of grey bristles stood erect on it. They were not pleasant to look at, and yet Stephen wondered that in such circumstances a man should think of shaving.

A few minutes before five Major Thorne returned to the room. He had shaved, washed, brushed, dressed himself, and stood in the doorway erect and spruce as befitted the holder of a commission in the British army.

"I am ready to start now."

Stephen rose and followed him. At the door of the barrack sat the mounted police, motionless on their horses. The young officer stood ready to mount. He was shivering and looked extremely miserable. No opportunity had been given him for shaving or washing. He was on his way to arrest a priest, and there was a strong probability of unpleasantness before the business was carried through. His men sat apparently impassive, with almost emotionless faces. But a close observer might have noticed an anxious look in the eyes of some of them. They were almost all of them Roman Catholics, and there is a suspicion of sacrilege about arresting a priest. Only one man seemed thoroughly happy and pleased—a red-haired, lean-faced sergeant who came from Portadown. He would have handcuffed an archbishop, or the Pope himself, with the greatest possible satisfaction if any one in authority had ordered him to do so.

The party marched unnoticed by any one over the

hilly road which led from one village to the other. Beyond them lay the sea, a desolate waste of water, dimly visible in the morning light. They smelt the breath of it and heard it rushing against the rocks. The road bent sharply to the left, skirted the shore, climbed a hill, and then below them lay Dhulough village.

The scene was scarcely different from that on which old Stephen Butler's eyes had looked nearly a hundred years before, when he rode into Dhulough after the destruction of Ireland's Parliament. Now his grandson drove behind the police and their English commander, and would watch, helpless, the arrest of one of the leaders of the people. A century of union with England had effected just this. The class which old Stephen Butler represented was weaned from the love of Ireland, and its members taught to regard themselves as England's garrison. The bonfires which had once burned in the street of Cuslough in honour of old Stephen Butler had burned that night, not for his grandson's honour, but for a priest. Major Thorne led his men to protect against Irishmen the property and privileges of an aristocracy which had forgotten the service of Ireland in the service of an Empire.

The party entered Dhulough and halted on the road outside the presbytery. A word of command was given. The red-haired sergeant dismounted, strode down the narrow, gravelled path, and knocked at the door. There was no response. He knocked again. Still there was no answer. The blinds remained down. There was not the smallest sign of life in the house.

"Knock louder," said Major Thorne. "Knock so that they must hear."

The sergeant hammered vigorously on the door, first

with its own knocker, then with his clenched fist. At last he began to kick it with his boot.

"Stop that," said the magistrate. "I didn't tell you to break open the door."

His tone was sharp and irritable. Stephen looked at him curiously. It seemed that Major Thorne was beginning to feel nervous. The men sat silent on their horses, listening intently for any noise within the house. The sergeant who was standing at the door turned—

"I think I hear somebody stirring within, sir."

If any one did stir he moved softly, and took no notice of the police outside. The door remained shut and the blinds drawn down. The magistrate looked at his watch. It was a quarter to six o'clock. Round the gate of the presbytery were gathered a few men and women. If the sergeant had failed to waken Father O'Sullivan, he had at least succeeded in arousing some of the neighbours. Then one of the parties of police which had gone out to arrest the members of the League committee marched into the village with their prisoner. Behind them came a little crowd, mostly young men, with a woman or two among them. These stopped to gaze in amazement at the police in front of the presbytery. They deserted the friend they were following to his captivity and remained to swell the crowd round the gate. Major Thorne looked at them anxiously. Then he gave another order.

"Go round to the back of the house and knock there."

The sergeant obeyed, and soon his banging on the back door was plainly audible. Another party of police marched in, and the crowd on the road increased again. The magistrate ordered his men to face the crowd. The horses were turned, and a semicircle of

armed men made a cordon round the presbytery gate. Major Thorne dismounted, went to the door himself and knocked. This time it opened slightly, and a woman's voice inquired—

"Who's there?"

"I wish," said Major Thorne, "to speak to Father O'Sullivan."

"Well, you can't," said the woman, "till he's done dressing himself."

The magistrate stood back and waited. He looked at his watch again. It was after six o'clock. He looked down the street. The crowd was increasing rapidly. The village was now full of people. He noted with satisfaction that the men seemed dazed and cowed, that no one was busy among them, that no preparations were going forward. He congratulated himself that the whole committee of the League, with the exception of Father O'Sullivan, was safe under lock and key. At half-past six he sent a messenger down to the barrack with orders that all the men who could be spared from guarding the prisoners should patrol the streets. A quarter of an hour later Father O'Sullivan appeared at the door of the presbytery.

"What do you want with me?" he asked.

"I have a warrant here for your arrest," said Major Thorne, "and I have come to execute it."

Father O'Sullivan flushed quickly and then grew quite pale. His eyes rested for a moment on the magistrate. Then he looked at the police. Then beyond them to the crowd. For a moment he seemed to contemplate an appeal to the people to rescue him.

While he hesitated Stephen Butler got out of his trap, passed through the police, and approached the presbytery.

"I should like," he said to Father O'Sullivan, "to walk with you down to the barrack. I should like you to take my arm if you are willing to do so."

The priest looked at him in amazement. He stepped forward to meet Stephen. Then his eyes dropped and there passed over his face an expression of suspicion. Stephen was a man of another class, of another religion. He stood to gain something, the trust of the people, influence to use for the undermining of the power of the League; or hoped by show of sympathy now to win afterwards the priest's place and the priest's leadership. Father O'Sullivan was born in a class that has been taught suspicion by betrayal, and educated for a priesthood which has had suspicion forced on it by being suspected. It was impossible for him, being what he was, to believe in simple generosity. He turned slowly, without raising his eyes, and went back to the door of the presbytery where he had stood at first. Stephen, shamed and miserable, slunk away through the police to his trap. The crowd filled the street now. He could not drive through it. He waited.

A woman's voice, shrill in excited expostulation, was heard inside the presbytery.

"You can't do it, Father. Sure, you wouldn't now. You, that's been in bed this fortnight, and me all the time putting poultices of linseed on your chest. It's murder and suicide, so it is. What's Father O'Sullivan, bad luck to him, or the police, the villains, that you should go killing yourself for the sake of the likes of them?"

Old Father Staunton tottered out and took his stand by the side of his curate on the doorstep. The house-keeper was clinging to him and trying to wind a red woollen comforter round his neck.

"May the devil roast the whole of ye!" she said when she saw the police and the crowd. "You'll be the death of Father Staunton before you've done, him that's worth the whole lot and litter of ye ten times over, if ye were all rolled into one."

Father O'Sullivan looked round. He had been bitterly angry with the parish priest, so angry that he had not spoken to him since the Sunday on which they had argued about the League. His face suddenly softened now and tears came into his eyes.

"Go back, Father!" he cried. "Go back! You ought to be in your bed. This is enough to be the death of you."

"Give me your arm," said Father Staunton. "I'm going with you as far as they'll let me. Come, now, give me your arm. I'm not so strong as I was. I want a young man to lean upon."

Father O'Sullivan turned to the magistrate.

"Keep your men back," he said, "and keep back yourself. I'll go to the barrack for you. But if there's law to be had or justice outside of law, you'll suffer for this morning's work."

"Hush!" said Father Staunton. "Hush, my son! Remember there's men listening to you out on the street who might take your words up wrong. Ah, Father O'Sullivan, don't be talking any more. Come along now. Aren't you a priest of God? Don't you know what He says, 'Blessed are they that suffer'?"

They started, the old priest leaning on Father O'Sullivan's arm. The people made a way for them to pass through. There was silence, save for the sobbing of women. Men knelt in the mud as the priests passed, caught Father O'Sullivan's hand and kissed it. Blessings and prayers were spoken low and fervently. Then

a woman flung up her arms and cried aloud. Shrieks of wild grief followed.

Suddenly the temper of the crowd changed. Fierce maledictions were shouted, and imprecations horrible to hear. The police, with Major Thorne at their head, rode after the two priests, and the people cursed them. Then high above the tumult rose a man's voice—

"If there's justice outside the law we'll make these hell-hounds suffer for this morning's work."

They were Father O'Sullivan's own words, almost his exact words, but a terrible meaning had been put into them. The police, who had been patrolling the street, drew together in a compact body and prepared to charge the crowd. Father Staunton tried to speak but failed. He coughed helplessly and leaned more heavily than ever on his curate's arm. At last they reached the barrack, hurrying over the few remaining yards of the way.

"Thank God!" said Stephen Butler.

He got down from his trap and passed through the police to the barrack door where Father Staunton stood. He put his arm round the old man, drew him away, lifted him into the trap and drove him back to the presbytery. There the housekeeper, still breathing out maledictions against the police, the League, and the people, received her master and hurried him unresisting back to his bed.

Stephen with set, white face, drove through the street again and received without flinching the curses which the people showered on him. They knew that he had spent hours in the barrack with Major Thorne. They had seen him arrive in Dhulough with the police. They had watched Father O'Sullivan turn away from him on the presbytery steps. They thought they understood.

CHAPTER XXI

MR. MANDERS was a man of such superb good humour that it was almost impossible for any one to quarrel with him. A good many people, moved to irritation in one way or another, had tried. They nearly always failed. Mr. Manders treated their scowls as a new and particularly excellent kind of joke, and insisted on becoming more and more friendly with them when they snubbed him. Major Thorne felt himself aggrieved by Mr. Manders' conduct in the police barrack on the night before the arrest. He determined to stand on his dignity and put the agent in his proper place. Mr. Manders met dignified coldness with an invitation to dinner.

"I'll give you a drop of the whisky you refused the other night," he said. "It's good stuff, no better."

"I fear," said Major Thorne, "that my duties——"

"Come now," said Mr. Manders, "you've got the whole committee of the League safely in gaol. There's nobody left worth arresting, unless you take Johnny Darcy or young Sheridan and a few of those boys."

Major Thorne was gratified by this allusion to the completeness of his capture. His manner softened a little. He smiled.

"I never saw a job of the sort done better," said Mr. Manders. "You had them by the leg before they knew you were after them. By the way, how is poor old

Heverin? I hear you have him under police protection."

"It's really unnecessary," said Major Thorne, "quite unnecessary. The power of the League is broken in this district. But Heverin seemed to be a little nervous."

"If I were Heverin, I should be very nervous indeed. You haven't captured Darcy and Sheridan yet, have you?"

"No. I don't consider men of that kind dangerous. Their leaders are gone."

"Ah!" Mr. Manders drawled the word. "But what about the dinner? I'll ask Butler to meet you if you like, and we'll fight our battles over again."

Major Thorne was a little uneasy about Stephen Butler. There might be a difficulty in explaining, even to a sympathetic Chief Secretary, how it came that a man who was a landlord, a magistrate, and a Member of Parliament, had been placed under a species of arrest in a police barrack.

"I suppose," he said, "that Mr. Butler is very angry with me?"

"Furious I should think; but I haven't seen him since. But never mind. He'll simmer down all right in time. He's a good sort, and can see a joke. You were only taking a rise out of him, of course."

"Oh, ah, yes. A rise. Quite so."

Mr. Manders did not press his invitation to dinner. He went instead to call on Stephen Butler.

"Look here, Butler," he said. "I'm a sort of professional peacemaker. You know that, don't you?"

Stephen had not noticed the fact, and looked dubious.

"Well, I am," said Mr. Manders. "I don't set up to have any very lofty principles, but I always think it a

- nuisance when two people are stand-off with each other.
- It can't be pleasant for the men themselves, and it makes everybody else very uncomfortable."

"What are you driving at?"

"I want you to ask Thorne to dinner. Now, wait a minute." Stephen's frown threatened an instant and flat refusal. "Hear me out. The man's an ass, I know; but he's really a well-intentioned kind of ass. After all, it's not his fault that he's an Englishman. He was born one you know, and never had any choice of his own. He has all the ridiculous notions that military Englishmen pick up; and of course he's a round man in a square hole for the job they've put him to. But he's here, and so far as I can see, he's likely to stop here for long enough. If you and he aren't on speaking terms it will be deuced awkward for me and for everybody else."

"His conduct towards me——"

"I know. But the man was as nervous as fiddle-strings that night. He thought he was engaged in preserving the British empire at the time. I shouldn't wonder a bit if he kept screwing his courage up all the while by saying to himself that England expected every man to do his duty; or something about the honour of the flag. You can't hold a man responsible for his actions when he's in that frame of mind."

Stephen smiled, and Mr. Manders felt that his battle was half won.

"He's a lonely poor devil, too. There he is, stuck in the police barrack with nobody to talk to, and most likely never a decent bite to eat. It's no wonder he gets morose and savage. You or I would be fit to arrest anybody—to put the handcuffs on little Carrie Hegarty herself—if we lived the kind of life he does."

"I don't suppose he'd come," said Stephen, "even if I did ask him."

"Come! He'd come jumping like a two-year-old if he got the chance. I can tell you he's in a deadly funk about the way he treated you. He knows he was in the wrong."

"Well," said Stephen, "I'll ask him, to oblige you. But I'm not going to sit through an evening with him by myself. You'll have to come too."

"I will, of course."

"And I'll ask the Hegartys and the Dean. I'm afraid Father Staunton is not well enough to go out at night."

"No use asking the Dean. He has a theory that he'd be shot if he put his nose out of doors after dark."

"Well, the Hegartys, then. I must have some one to keep us from talking about the state of the country."

"Carrie Hegarty will do that all right," said Mr. Manders. "I defy any man to talk sense if she's there."

The next time Mr. Manders met Major Thorne he heard that the invitation had been received and accepted.

"I felt I ought to go," said Major Thorne. "I wouldn't like Mr. Butler to think there was any ill-will on my part. He's a young man, and if he's wrong-headed now, I'm sure he'll learn sense later on. No doubt he means well, and, after all, he's a gentleman."

Mr. Manders chuckled. An unsolicited testimonial to the character of Stephen Butler of Dhulough from this immensely self-important half-pay officer struck him as an amusing thing.

It was with very little inclination for festivity that Stephen Butler prepared to entertain his guests. He believed, as Major Thorne did, that the Land League had been broken in Dhulough; but he felt that a terribly severe price had been paid for the victory. Between

him and the people whom he loved there was a barrier raised. Friendship had become wholly impossible. He knew that nothing he could do or say would ever win their real confidence again ; he was to be for the future an alien on his own land, the enemy of those to whom he wished nothing but well. He saw, too, that the political movement in which he had taken part had entered on a new phase. For a long time—perhaps longer than he had to live—the land struggle, which was in reality a war of class against class, would take the place of the national movement to which he had devoted himself. There would be no room for him in the new Irish Party. Its driving force would not be the ideal of national independence nor the pure love for Ireland.

He was anxious also about Father Staunton. The old man was suffering for his excursion in the raw morning air. He had a severe attack of bronchitis, and the local doctor did not seem satisfied with his condition. Stephen realised that he had become very fond of the old priest now that there seemed a possibility of his death. He recollected long evenings spent by the fire in the library at Dhulough House and Father Staunton's pleasant talk of men and books. Walks by the shore of the lake in springtime and summer expeditions by boat to Rafferty's island, chance encounters and friendly greetings in the village street crowded to his recollection. He would have been better pleased if he had not undertaken to entertain Major Thorne and the Hegartys.

He braced himself to meet them. Mr. and Mrs. Hegarty were the first to arrive. The clergyman seemed, as he entered the room, to be even more absent-minded and less interested in his surroundings than

usual. After shaking hands with Stephen, he stood listless and inattentive beside the fire. He did not speak at all. His eyes had a curious, vacant stare; but now and then he glanced round him quickly. When he did this his eyes were full of fear. It was as if he expected to see some terrible thing approaching him, as if he were sure that it would come, but did not know when and from what direction to look for it. Stephen noticed these rapid turnings of Eugene Hegarty's head, and the strange, terrified look in his eyes. It was impossible to avoid noticing them, for at other times the man stood very still and his face was expressionless.

Mrs. Hegarty was aggressively cheerful and talkative. Perhaps she was aware of her husband's mood, and wished to cover his strange behaviour. Certainly she was entirely pleased with herself, that is to say, with her own appearance. She had a new dress of a bright blue colour. She had bought it a few weeks before in a Dublin shop, and was assured that it was highly fashionable in shape and trimming. Round her neck, on a thin chain, hung a large gold locket—her most cherished ornament. A Latin cross, a symbol which looked strange on Mrs. Hegarty's plump flesh, stood in high relief on one side of the locket. The other side, the side not exposed to view, had a glass panel, underneath which was a lock of grey hair, her mother's. Her arms were bare up to her shoulders. On one of them she wore a broad gold bracelet, a thing with a protruding hinge and an inefficient clasp. Round the other, for want of a second bracelet, she had bound a strip of light blue velvet, not unlike a garter in appearance, which was fastened with a buckle of shiny paste brilliants. She had a pair of white kid gloves, which she carried in her hand but did not put on,

because, in spite of much rubbing with bread crumbs, they looked better folded up. With the gloves she carried a fan, made principally of pink feathers. She would have been glad if the feathers had been blue, like the dress and the velvet band, but they were pink, and she would not on that account deprive herself of the dignity of carrying a fan. Tied into the ring of the fan, so that it would have been very difficult to release it for any useful purpose, was a tiny blue pocket-handkerchief. Her yellow hair was coiled and piled upon her head, so that it added inches to her height. It was stuck through with immensely thick brass hair-pins, parts of which glistened on the surface of the coils and reflected little points of light when she moved her head. Her great blue eyes shone with anticipation of pleasure. She was all smiles and animation.

"Do you remember," she said to Stephen, "that afternoon at the rectory—oh, so long ago, wasn't it? Please don't count up how long ago—when I wanted to tell your fortune by your hand? I couldn't do it a bit, and Mr. Manders made fun of me, and I think you were a little bit cross. I didn't understand it then, but I've learned a lot since. Oh, quite a lot. I've studied, you know, really studied. When I was up in Dublin last month—I think all those things are so interesting—palmistry and clairvoyance and mesmerism and crystal-gazing and everything that isn't quite common. I hope you believe in them all, Mr. Butler. I'm sure you do, don't you?"

Stephen was watching Eugene Hegarty. He had just caught one of the curious, frightened glances which the man shot round him. He wondered what cause there was for fear.

"Of course I do," he said.

‘I’m so glad. I knew you did. I could see it in your eyes. I can always tell by a man’s eyes whether he has a soul, I mean that kind of soul. I was in Dublin last month, and while I was there——’

The door opened. Major Thorne and Mr. Manders came in together. There were greetings and introductions. Then Mrs. Hegarty, seating herself becomingly in a low chair, addressed Major Thorne—

“I was just telling Mr. Butler that when I was last in town”—she meant Dublin, but she half hoped that Major Thorne, an Englishman, would understand that she paid occasional visits to the larger metropolis—“I saw a wonderful thought-reading performance. A man, quite blindfold, held my hand and found a pin.”

“That,” said Mr. Manders, who stood near her, “is the most useful conjuring trick I ever heard of. I can’t find pins when I want them with my eyes open.”

“But it’s not a trick,” said Mrs. Hegarty. “That’s just the point. It’s all done by animal magnetism. I got a lesson afterwards from the man himself, and he said I was an excellent subject—medium, I mean. He did, really. But you’re laughing at me, Major Thorne. It’s very unkind of you.”

“Nothing would induce me to laugh,” said Major Thorne. “When I was in India I saw a conjurer—we were stationed in the hills at the time, I remember. It was in ’76 or ’77, and we had been sent up from Delhi——”

The story threatened to be a long one. Major Thorne’s stories frequently were. No man was more sparing of words or prompter in coming to the point than he was when there was work on hand, the capturing of bullocks, suppression of Leagues, arresting of priests, or such things. But no man believed more

thoroughly in his own power of being entertaining when there was no business to be done. Mr. Manders had some experience of the Major's stories. He turned to Stephen Butler.

"I wish you'd been with us just now," he said. "You'd have seen the gallant Major jump. He thinks he's instilled a wholesome horror of the law into the people, but he's a little uneasy when he's driving in the dusk. Just as we were passing the lake at the back of your house we came on old Rafferty toddling up to see you. 'That fellow's a Fenian,' I said. 'I know him well.' I give you my word the Major had him covered with a revolver before you could have said knife. 'Good evening to you, Rafferty,' said I. 'Where are you going to at this time of the night?' It appeared he was coming up to see you. I turned him back. I thought you wouldn't want him here. Then he said he'd like to speak to me. I dare say we'll both have a visit from him to-morrow morning."

"I wonder what he wanted," said Stephen. "He often comes up here to see me; but I never knew him come at night."

Major Thorne was still pressing on with his story of the Indian juggler, but Mrs. Hegarty's attention seemed to be wandering. Mr. Manders seized upon a pause of the narrative and broke in.

"I'll tell you what, Mrs. Hegarty. After dinner you shall find a pin for us. We'll have a regular séance. We'll put out all the lamps and tie Major Thorne down into a chair and stick a pin into him. Then you will be brought in blindfolded to find the pin. If you can't do it at first we'll go on sticking pins into him until his shrieks attract you. Listen to this, Butler."

Stephen was again watching Eugene Hegarty, and

again wondering at the recurrent spasms of fear which seized the man. He turned at the sound of Mr. Manders' address.

"Listen to this, Butler. Mrs. Hegarty has been taking lessons in mesmerism, and after dinner she's going to get you and Major Thorne into her power. She says she'll make you stand quite rigid on one leg each while I hold lighted matches to the tips of your fingers and you won't feel anything."

Mrs. Hegarty shook her fan at him while he spoke till the pink feathers quivered violently, and small fragments of them broke off and floated in the air.

"I never said anything of the sort. I can't mesmerise people. I do wish I could. I only said that after dinner I'd find a pin, if you all liked."

"Have you lost one?" asked Stephen.

A burst of laughter greeted his inquiry. Then dinner was announced. Stephen took the delighted Mrs. Hegarty into the dining-room. Major Thorne followed. Mr. Manders took Eugene Hegarty by the arm and led him after the others.

"If I didn't know you were a strict teetotaler, Hegarty, I'd say you'd been drinking pretty heavily. You're all on the jump, and you look as if you were seeing things that aren't here; you know what I mean?"

"I—I—I don't know what's the matter with me. I'm not well. For the last two days I've been frightened—frightened of nothing—and the feeling is getting worse."

"Pull yourself together, man. Take a glass of Butler's champagne; it'll do you all the good in the world. You've nothing to be afraid about. There's not a man in the country would hurt you."

After dinner, Mr. Manders suggested that they should

have some music. On his way from the dining-room to the drawing-room he had seen a small roll of music laid unobtrusively on the top of Eugene Hegarty's overcoat. He realised at once that it belonged to Mrs. Hegarty, and that she had come to the party prepared to sing. He was a man of kindly heart, and he was most anxious that each of Stephen's queer collection of guests should be pleased. Mrs. Hegarty would certainly enjoy herself if she was asked to sing.

"Butler," he said, "I hope your piano is in tune. I'm sure Mrs. Hegarty will sing for us if you ask her. It seems years, Mrs. Hegarty, since I've heard one of your songs."

He fetched the music-roll from the hall. Major Thorne lit the candles at the piano, and stood prepared to turn over the pages of the music. Mrs. Hegarty made much show of resistance, and extracted a promise from Mr. Manders that he would sing after she had finished. Then she spread out a song before her and sat down.

In many works of fiction there are passages of a moving kind descriptive of heroines at pianos. The rooms in which they sit are dimly lighted; and there is an audience, sometimes a solitary and amorous hero, sometimes several other people, all appreciative of music. On such occasions the lady begins by striking a few pathetic chords, and then drifts gradually into a dreamy German waltz, perhaps one of those composed by Strauss. She holds her audience spell-bound, and very often the situation develops in an interesting way when she has finished. Mrs. Hegarty, who read a good deal of fiction and found great pleasure in the piano scenes, felt that the circumstances in which she was placed required romantic action. The room was dimly

lighted. A warrior—a silent, strong man of action—stood beside her. In the background were Stephen Butler and Mr. Manders as well as her husband. She struck a succession of chords, some in the treble part of the piano, some in the bass. Then she attacked with determination the music on the page before her. She sang words about violets and a child's grave in a forgotten corner of a churchyard to a shamelessly sentimental tune. Major Thorne applauded heartily. It is to be presumed that he really enjoyed the song. If the men of his nation do not enjoy such songs, why are so many of them written in English? Mr. Manders, having winked first at Stephen Butler and then at Eugene Hegarty, also applauded. Mrs. Hegarty rose, fluttered and delighted, from her seat. She cast a glance of gratitude at Major Thorne and then approached Mr. Manders.

"Now we must have your song," she said; "shall I play your accompaniment for you? Where is your music?"

He beckoned to her with an air of great mystery. She followed him to an ill-lit corner of the great drawing-room. His face, his manner, and his silent beckoning filled her with intense curiosity.

"Mrs. Hegarty," he whispered, "I can only sing one song. You know what it is."

"Oh," she said, "surely more than one. I've heard you sing I'm sure a dozen different songs."

This was quite true. Mr. Manders had a pleasant voice, and possessed a large and varied stock of songs.

"But there's only one that I can sing really well," he whispered again, "only one that I should care to sing after listening to you."

Mrs. Hegarty blushed.

"Why not sing it, then? I'll play your accompaniment for you."

"I don't know that it would be safe," he whispered mysteriously. "I don't mind for myself of course. I'm thinking of you."

"Safe!" gasped Mrs. Hegarty.

"Major Thorne, you know." Mr. Manders' voice became almost inaudible. "He's a government official. He might arrest us both."

"What is the song?" asked Mrs. Hegarty.

"'The West's Awake.' You remember how it goes? 'Sing, oh, hurrah! let England quake.' Would he stand that, do you think?"

"How silly you are! Of course he wouldn't mind. Nobody minds the words of a song."

"Well, if you're prepared to risk it, come along. I know there's a copy somewhere. Mr. Butler has a collection of all the rebel songs ever written."

Mrs. Hegarty played the accompaniment. Mr. Manders sang the words with spirit and effect. Stephen Butler, awakened to attentiveness, stirred in his chair. His hands tightened on the arms of it. Major Thorne fidgeted uneasily. He was not quite sure whether Mr. Manders was poking fun at him or not. He often found it difficult to appreciate Mr. Manders' peculiar humour. He was quite sure that he preferred the violets and the forsaken grave and the emotion stirred by the thought of the dead child. He did not care for this violent appeal to militant patriotism. In all probability, he reflected, Mr. Manders was only making some obscure kind of joke. Still, the idea of England's quaking under any conceivable circumstances was not one which could, with any propriety, be treated in jest. There are many subjects which are quite proper for

humorous treatment—drunken men, for instance, and mothers-in-law, and Irishmen. There are other subjects, such as the Decalogue and the British Empire, which cannot be joked about without gross indecency. Major Thorne, in his capacity of magistrate, was more or less responsible for both the Decalogue and the Empire. But he was charitable enough to suppose that the song must be meant to be funny. No sane man would sing such words in serious earnest. Mr. Manders' voice rose to an impassioned shout on the last notes, and Major Thorne drew himself up stiffly. He was an officer in the British army, and he meant to look the part. He offered no applause. It was in his opinion damned bad form to sing the song in his presence. Mr. Manders, quite unabashed, proposed the pin-hunt should begin.

"Have you got a pin, Butler? The time has now come for pursuing it. Do you prefer a black pin or a white one, Mrs. Hegarty? Major Thorne is sure to have one in the back of his tie. We'll take that. Now we'll put out the lamps."

"You needn't do that," said Mrs. Hegarty.

"Oh, yes we will. We must do the thing properly, or not at all. We'll have the curtains pulled back and let the moonlight stream in. There's nothing like moonlight on these occasions, and there's a good moon tonight. Out you go, Mrs. Hegarty; out into the passage till I've hid the pin. Then I'll come and blindfold you."

He pushed her from the room and closed the door.

"Now, Butler, wake up man and put out the lamps. We mustn't keep the lady waiting. Hegarty, you pull back the curtains of the near window. Don't sit there as if you were looking at your own ghost. There, that

will do. The light from one window will be enough. Let's have some darkness too. It's more mysterious. You sit here in the shadow, Major Thorne. There really is a pin in the back of your collar, isn't there? All right, leave it there. Now is everybody ready?"

He opened the door and led in Mrs. Hegarty, blindfolded with a large silk pocket-handkerchief. She placed the fingers of one hand on his pulse. With her other hand she pressed her own forehead. For a moment she stood quite still. Then she made a short rush, dragging Mr. Manders after her. She charged into the piano.

"Cold," said Mr. Manders, "and getting colder."

"Don't say that," she said. "This isn't a silly game. It's really serious."

Again she paused. Then, perhaps a little sore after her collision with the piano, stepped very cautiously across the room and laid her hand upon her husband's head.

"I forgot to mention," said Mr. Manders, "that it wasn't a hairpin we hid."

"I don't believe," said Mrs. Hegarty, "that you're thinking a bit about where the pin is."

"I'm not," said Mr. Manders candidly. "I didn't know I had to. I was thinking how unpleasant it would have been for Mr. Hegarty if we'd hidden the pin in his scalp."

Mrs. Hegarty stamped her foot.

"Of course you must think of where the pin is. How can I read your thoughts if you're not thinking of what I want to know?"

"You can't, of course; stupid of me not to have understood that sooner. Never mind, I'm thinking now."

"Think hard."

"My mind," said Mr. Manders, "is fixed on the pin. Earth at this moment holds nothing for me except the pin. But it's very exhausting. I wish I had let Major Thorne do this part of the business. He's used to concentrating his thoughts and I'm not."

"It's much more exhausting for me," said Mrs. Hegarty. "Please think."

Mr. Manders' face assumed a fixed and rigid expression. He began towing Mrs. Hegarty slowly across the room towards Major Thorne. He firmly checked an attempt at an independent expedition which would have led into the fireplace. He guided her successfully to within a foot of Major Thorne's chair.

"You've almost got it now," he said.

Mrs. Hegarty tore the bandage off her eyes.

"You're too bad," she said. "I won't try any more with you. You won't do anything right."

"I'm very sorry," said Mr. Manders. "I really am sorry, and I was doing my dead best all the time."

"Well, then, all I can say is that you're certainly not a medium."

"I'm not. I always feared I wasn't. But I may improve with practice. We'll try again some day, Mrs. Hegarty, when there's nobody else there. Suppose you have a turn now with Major Thorne. I shouldn't a bit wonder if he turned out to be an excellent medium."

The door opened and the servant announced that Mr. Manders' car was at the door.

"Dear me," said Stephen, roused to his duty as a host, "it can't be late yet. Stay a little longer and we'll hide something else, something bigger than a pin."

"I daren't keep the mare standing," said Mr. Manders. "She'd kick the car into smithereens if she got cold. I

was just going to suggest that I should drive Mr. and Mrs. Hegarty round to the rectory. It would take me very little out of my way."

Mrs. Hegarty, reflecting on the indignity of having to put on her goloshes in the hall and pin up the blue skirt, accepted the offer.

CHAPTER XXII

MRS. HEGARTY draped a white woollen shawl over head and shoulders. Major Thorne and Mr. Manders muffled themselves with great-coats and scarfs, and helped themselves to cigars from the box which Stephen handed to them. Eugene Hegarty, who did not smoke and got into his coat quickly, opened the door and stood on the steps staring out at the sea.

To his left the avenue reached away in a wide half-circle towards the trees and the dark lake behind the house. It lay white in the moonlight. Before him and beyond the avenue was a long stretch of rough grass, white as if snow had fallen on it. One dark line only crossed its surface, the shadow of a low stone wall guarding the sunk fence which divided the lawn from the fields beyond, where cattle grazed. Below the grass of the lawn was the beach where Stephen had stumbled among the breaking waves on his first Sunday in Dhulough. Beyond that again was the sea, calm to-night and shining under the moon, but making a sullen moan. Far out, but clearly outlined by the ring of surf which never even in calm weather left its shores, lay Ilaun an Anama. The voices of the men in the hall, the scent of their tobacco, and the laughter of his wife reached Eugene Hegarty's ears as he stood gazing. But the words and laughter meant nothing to him. The fear, the vague, inexplicable terror which had haunted him before, seized him now with a paralysing grip. He

could not turn his eyes away from the lonely stretch of land and water before him. He trembled and sweated with a horror which he could not fight against.

Stephen Butler came out of the door and greeted Mr. Manders' groom who stood beside his horse's head.

"It's a fine night, Thomas, but cold. Ah! You've put the rug over the mare. That's right. Mr. Manders was afraid she might get chilly."

"It's herself would be making the ructions if she did, sir. That's the one he bought from Lord Daintree's man as a two-year-old, and she never had a strap nor harness on her till I put her under the car six months ago. But, sure, she's a fine stepper."

"Well, you'll have to be careful to-night. You're taking a lady along with you."

"Never fear, your honour; she has as sweet a mouth and as tender as the lady herself."

"Come along, Mrs. Hegarty," said Mr. Manders. "You and I will sit on the near side of the car and put your husband and the Major on the other. That will be the best division of the party. I'm the heaviest man of the three. You and I will weigh down the other two nicely."

Mrs. Hegarty stood beside him.

"Oh," she said, "I've forgotten my music. I think I must have left it in the drawing-room."

Major Thorne, who had not yet left the house, turned and went back for the music.

"Now then, Hegarty," said Mr. Manders, "up with you on the far side and get the rug ready. The Major will be round with you in a minute. Hold the mare steady, Tom, till Mrs. Hegarty gets up."

He stepped forward, holding out his hand for Mrs. Hegarty to grasp.

"Hullo!" he said, "I forgot. There's my rifle on the seat. You wouldn't be very comfortable sitting on that, would you, Mrs. Hegarty?"

He took the rifle from the car, slipped the waterproof cover off it, and held it out to Stephen, who was still standing on the doorstep.

"A Winchester repeater," he said. "A neat weapon. There's eight cartridges ready for use this minute. I've nothing to do but pull this handle to put a fresh one into place ready for firing."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Hegarty. "How horrid! Please be careful. I wish you wouldn't take it on the car with me when it's loaded. Suppose the horse was to shy and it went off?"

"Unless the horse shies so as to get his hind leg against the trigger it won't go off, Mrs. Hegarty, without my wanting it to."

"Promise me faithfully that it won't," she said.

Major Thorne appeared in the hall with the roll of music in his hand.

"Mr. Butler," he said, "may I have another of your cigars to see me home?"

"Yes, do. Help yourself," said Stephen. "The box is there on the table."

Mr. Manders took the rifle from Stephen and began to wrap it again in its cover.

"Major Thorne says the district's quiet," he said, "but I'd as soon have this with me as not. It inspires confidence. Come along now, Mrs. Hegarty. Up with you."

Major Thorne came out of the door and stood between Stephen and Mrs. Hegarty.

"I've got the music," he said. "It was just where you left it——"

Mrs. Hegarty turned to take it from him. Suddenly she flung up her arms and collapsed, crumpled up on the ground.

At the same moment a shot rang out clearly through the still air. Major Thorne sprang forward instantly, dropping the music and thrusting his hand into the pocket of his coat. Stephen saw Mrs. Hegarty's hands twitch once or twice in a curious, spasmodic way. Then he felt a pain, like that of a sharp blow on his right side near his shoulder. He heard a second shot; felt his arm grow quite numb and then acutely painful; realised that he was becoming giddy and leaned back for support against the doorpost, clutching it with his left hand to save himself from falling.

Major Thorne, with his revolver in his hand, rushed into the middle of the gravel sweep.

"There they are!" he shouted. "They're running from behind the wall. There are two of them. They are making for the trees by the lake. Fire, Manders, fire!"

He blazed away with his own revolver as he spoke. The shots followed each other rapidly till he had to stop to reload. Then, when the revolver had ceased crackling for a moment, there was a louder report. Mr. Manders had fired his rifle. The two men, clearly to be seen in the moonlight, still ran steadily towards the belt of trees which stood round the lake.

"Damn it," said Mr. Manders, "I've missed! For God's sake, Thorne, don't start shooting off that pop-gun of yours again! They are far out of your range. And don't shout at me. I see the devils as well as you do, and I'm doing my best. Tom, pull the mare out of that and get clear."

"Quick!" said Major Thorne. "What the hell are

you waiting for? They'll get to cover if you don't fire."

A few paces away from the door of the house, just in front of the corner of the bottom step, was a large stone block about three feet high. Long ago it had been placed there as a help to the old Stephen Butler when he grew stiff and found mounting his horse a difficulty. Mr. Manders sat down behind it with his legs curled up under him. He leaned his rifle on it. The foremost runner was within twenty yards of the trees. There was a moment of tense silence, then Mr. Manders fired, the runner stumbled, fell, struggled to rise, and fell again. A second and a third shot followed in quick succession. The other runner reached the trees and disappeared.

"Missed him, by God!" he said. "But I winged one. That's not bad shooting considering the light. And he's not dead. I'm glad he's not dead, for I want to see him hanged. He's crawling on. Come along, Thorne, we'll go and gather him up."

He got up on his feet and looked round. Major Thorne and Eugene Hegarty were kneeling together over Mrs. Hegarty's body.

"Very well," said Mr. Manders; "you stay there. I'll bag the ruffian. Just give me your revolver, will you, Thorne? The other fellow may be waiting to take a shot at me from behind the trees. The revolver may be handy at close quarters. I'll get him too if he's there."

Major Thorne handed over his revolver without a word and bent over Mrs. Hegarty. She lay just as she had fallen first, dead. Her husband held one of her hands against his lips. He was dazed, speechless, helpless. Major Thorne gently disengaged his hold on the hand

and stretched the body out reverently. On the bodice of the blue dress there was a single stain of blood. She had been shot through the heart. Eugene Hegarty, without speaking a word, began to stroke the bare arm which lay beside him on the gravel, at first with his two hands, then, bending low over it, with his lips.

The servants, a frightened crowd of men and maids, stood in the hall peering out. Major Thorne stood up and called to them.

"Carry her in," he said.

Then he turned to Stephen Butler, who was still leaning against the doorpost struggling with unconsciousness.

"My God!" said Major Thorne. "You're hit too, and badly hit."

The fact was obvious. Stephen's coat and shirt front were soaked with blood. Major Thorne put his arm round him and led him to the door. Two of the maids and Stephen's butler passed them, carrying the dead body. Mr. Hegarty followed, still silent.

"Who is that?" asked Stephen feebly. "Is she dead?"

Major Thorne did not answer him. He turned to Mr. Manders' groom.

"Drive like hell," he said, "for the nearest doctor, and on your way stop at the police barrack and send up the sergeant and four men. Don't lose a minute. Can you walk a bit further?" he said to Stephen. "I want to get you up to bed. Steady now. Lean on me. I'll keep my arm round you. Here, you," he called to a maid, who still lingered in the hall, "where's Mr. Butler's bedroom? Light candles, lamps, anything, and show me the way."

"No," said Stephen feebly, "let me stay here in the

hall for a while. I'll be all right in a few minutes, and there may be things to be done that I must see after."

Major Thorne attempted no argument. He laid Stephen down on the floor.

"Fetch me pillows and cushions to put under him," he said to the maid, "and get the whisky off the side-board in the dining-room."

Holding Stephen's head upon his knee, he began to cut away his clothes with his pocket-knife until he had the wound exposed. The maid returned, and with her the other servants. They carried cushions, pillows, and blankets. They were white-faced, desperately frightened, but ready to do the bidding of the one man in the house capable of giving orders.

"Good," said Major Thorne. "Now fetch an old sheet, old linen of any sort, and tear it into strips. I'm afraid this is serious, and I must get the bleeding stopped at once."

He held a glass of whisky to Stephen's lips. A faint colour returned to his cheeks as he drank the spirit.

There was a noise of heavy treading on the gravel outside. The door was pushed open and Mr. Manders entered the hall carrying a man in his arms.

"I've got him, Thorne," he said as he entered. "It's a good job he's light for I had to carry him the whole way. He couldn't walk a step. My God, Butler, are you hit? And where's Mrs. Hegarty?"

"Dead," said Major Thorne; "shot through the heart."

Mr. Manders laid the man he was carrying down on the floor. He spoke no single word of sorrow, amazement or horror. He stood staring at the man, his prisoner, who lay below him, with an expression of hatred in his face. His lips parted slightly and drew

out into a grin behind which his teeth gleamed. The two figures were strongly contrasted. On the floor huddled up was a thin, almost emaciated boy in ragged clothes. His hands were clenched in the effort to bear pain without moaning. His face was contorted with pain, but his eyes were clear. They looked straight at Mr. Manders who stood above him. They expressed neither hatred or fear, nothing but a kind of sorrowful amazement. Mr. Manders, strong, vigorous, and upright, was plainly well fed, was well dressed and well cared for. He stood there a type of those to whom the world gives rulership and its good things. He glared down at the wounded boy and then said slowly, speaking his words through his clenched teeth with extraordinary malevolence—

“You will be hanged by the neck until you are dead. Afterwards, you will burn in the eternal torture of hell, damned—damned—damned!”

Then he turned and passed through the door into the open air. He stood white and grim in the moonlight. The grin on his face disappeared, and in its place came an expression of vindictive determination. It was likely that the man who had escaped would be pursued with relentless energy, would be caught, if it lay in Mr. Manders' power to catch him. It was curious that he left the care of Stephen Butler entirely to Major Thorne. His affection for Stephen, and it was a real affection, focussed itself to a single desire for vengeance so absorbing that there was no room left in his mind for a wish to tend or help.

“Manders,” said Stephen feebly, “who is he?”

He got no answer. Major Thorne, busy bandaging the wound, took no notice of the question. Mr. Manders was gone. Stephen raised himself with a struggle on

the elbow of his uninjured arm and looked at the man who lay in a corner of the hall.

"Sheridan!" he cried. Then he sank back moaning and crying in a pitiful way. "Why did you do it? Oh, why did you do it?"

A voice stronger than his, though feeble too, came to him across the hall.

"Mr. Butler, your honour. Mr. Butler, listen to me. Sure you'll believe me now. It wasn't you we wanted. The God above us knows it wasn't you. The blood's running from me now, but I'd give every drop of it and every drop that's left in my heart along with that to save yourself from ache or pain or wound. There was love on my people for your people in the old days, and there's love on us for you to-day. There isn't one but loves you. I told you, the day you took me by the hand in the agent's office—I told you there'd be bad work, but God knows I never thought it would have been like this. I'll go a happy man to the gallows that's waiting for me if so be that it's the will of God for me to hear of yourself being well and strong before my time comes. And, your honour, Mr. Butler, if it's what he said that's for me after; if it's hell itself——" He stopped for a moment, choked by a sudden sob, "I'll be able to bear it, and worse itself, if there is worse, only I'd like to think that you won't be cursing us. You know the way it was with us. We were driven till there was no road for us to go but a bad one. It never was you we wanted, but only the stranger that came here among us to do us harm."

Major Thorne finished his work on Stephen's shoulder, and crossed over to where Sheridan lay.

"Lie still, my man, lie still," he said, "and let me see what I can do for you."

It was a witness to the extraordinary strength of the instinct for duty which has made the best Englishmen the great men they are that Major Thorne should have knelt down beside this man, and set to work at his wound with the same cool skill and the same tenderness with which he had treated Stephen Butler. He neither remembered that the man was destined to be hanged nor that his own life had been the one desired. He recognised simply that it was his duty to stay the bleeding, and bind up the wound as best he could.

"Come here and help me," he said to the butler who stood near.

The man hesitated. Sheridan's thigh, ploughed by Mr. Manders' bullet, lay bare, a ghastly sight. Then Eugene Hegarty stepped forward and knelt down beside Major Thorne.

"Let me help you," he said.

He had come down from the room where his dead wife lay, and he offered to give his help to Major Thorne in binding up the wound of the man who had killed her.

"Very well. Put your arm under him and raise him slightly. That's right. Now, lift. What's that you're saying?"

"Nothing," said Eugene Hegarty. "I didn't speak."

In fact his lips, without his knowing it, had let words escape.

"Father," he muttered, as he slipped his arm under Sheridan, "forgive them, for they know not what they do."

CHAPTER XXIII

BEFORE she went into the hospital to be trained as a nurse, Miss Mary Lewis was a sentimental young woman with a taste for writing letters and reading those poems of Tennyson's which deal with domestic life. Her training developed an unexpected resourcefulness and competence in her, and endowed her with an effusively cheerful manner. She was fully convinced that an effervescence of high spirits in a nurse made for the health of a patient. When she was sent down to Galway to take charge of Stephen Butler, she brought with her to the grim Dhulough a gaiety of the most infectiously sanitary kind.

She entered the sick-room smiling.

"I've good news for you to-day," she said. "The doctor says you may sit up for a couple of hours this afternoon."

Stephen looked at her eagerly.

"May I have a visitor?"

Nurse Lewis was a young woman, younger by several years than Stephen was, but she had acquired a capacity for motherly authority. She smiled again, and shook a finger at him.

"You mustn't be wanting too much all at once. We must creep, you know, before we walk. You'll have to keep quiet for a little while yet. Is there anybody in particular that you want to see?"

"Mr. Manders, my agent."

"But you mustn't think of business. He'll see after all your business for you. He was here this morning to inquire for you, and he told me to say, if you asked any questions, that everything was going on all right, and that you weren't to bother yourself."

Stephen sighed. He had little strength and little courage for a pitched battle with this vigorous young woman who ministered to him. And a struggle, if he ventured on one, would be most undignified. He had a suspicion that Nurse Lewis was quite capable of treating him as a naughty child.

"I should like," he said, later in the day when she had him swathed and helpless in a large chair before the fire, "to look out at the sea."

The sun was shining brilliantly through the west windows of the house. It did not seem to Nurse Lewis that any harm could come of indulging Stephen's fancy. She wheeled his chair over to the window, and wrapped an extra shawl round his shoulders.

"Now," she said, "you're nice and comfortable. Would you like me to read to you? No, you mustn't have the newspapers. You know what the doctor said about them."

Doctors, who are benevolent and wise, generally refuse a sick man anything that he really wants. Stephen wanted newspapers. He desired very much to know what was going on in Ireland. Even a leading article in an English paper on the condition of Connaught would have been to him as cold water to a thirsty soul. Therefore his doctor forbade him to hear or read newspapers, and he was helpless. Mankind, having more or less got rid of the tyranny of the priest, who was supposed to know what was good for the soul, has submitted to the yoke of the medical man, who, with

credentials no more reliable in reality than those of the Church, poses as an infallible authority on what is good for the body. No doubt when we have successfully rebelled against the doctors, inaugurated a kind of scientific Protestantism, we shall invite somebody else to enslave us. Very likely our new owner will be the schoolmaster, and we shall spend our whole lives in passing examinations, believing that schoolmasters know what is good for our minds.

Stephen looked pathetically at Nurse Lewis. She smiled down at him with the greatest cheerfulness.

"Not the newspapers," she said. "Oh, certainly not. But a book? Shall I read out to you?"

While very weak Stephen had submitted to *The May Queen* and some heartrending verses about a child who was operated on in a hospital by a heartless doctor. He was not yet strong enough to insist on getting a newspaper or a visitor, but he felt equal to resisting another poem.

"No thank you," he said firmly; "I would rather be alone."

Nurse Lewis was not the least vexed by this curt dismissal. She set a small table beside his chair and placed a bell on it.

"Please ring," she said, "if you want me."

Then she left him.

Stephen could not yet realise or understand what happened on the night of his dinner-party. Certain facts were clear to him. He knew that Mrs. Hegarty was dead; that Sheridan was awaiting his trial for murder, and that he himself had been wounded; but these facts had come to him afterwards, as it were from outside. They were pieces of information which had somehow been conveyed to him. The scene itself and

the parts which the different people had played in it were a confused memory, and no more ; like the impression left in the morning by a very evil dream. It was all unreal, fantastic in its horror. Sitting before the window he tried, as he had tried more than once already, to recall the sequence of events, to arrange some ordered memory of what had happened. He failed as he had failed before, and after a little while gave up trying. He sat quiet in his chair, not feeling much or thinking much, content to gaze out at the sea.

The sunlight sparkled brightly from the tops of the waves and shone, dazzling white, from the surf round Ilaun an Anama. It pleased him to picture the waves curling over towards the shore below the house, and to think how the light was shining green through their crests for the instant that they hung poised before breaking into bubbles and foam. He fancied that he could hear their crashing and the hollow roar of the stones rolled up and down against each other on the beach. He knew just how, further on at Thrawawn, where there was sand instead of stones, the waves, fringed with foam, rushed smoothly up and drew back in swirls, leaving long curved lines of quivering froth to mark the utmost of their achievement.

His eyes travelled back from Thrawawn, past the stony beach to the place where low rocks reached out, a long point, into the sea. The tide was at ebb, and the brown seaweed on the rocks lay uncovered to the sunlight and the breeze. There was a boy moving slowly about among the pools and the seaweed. He had a basket slung across his shoulder. Every now and then he lay flat, sometimes hanging over the edge of the sea, sometimes above one of the deep pools which the receding tide had left. Afterwards, standing up, he would open

his basket and drop something into it. Stephen knew well what he was doing. In the clefts of the rocks, under ledges and in the corners of the pools, large red crabs harboured at low tide. The fishermen used these for bait, putting the red pulp out of their backs on hooks and fastening it with threads of raw sheep's wool. The claws they smashed with stones, and threw them into the water as ground-bait before they fished. The boy was dragging the crabs from their holes. An hour or two later, at half-tide or thereabouts, he would go out with his father, anchor the curragh with a large stone and catch fish, bright-scaled gunners with bulging bellies, greeny black coal-fish, brown rock codlings, and plaice with white, gleaming undersides. Above the rocks hovered three gulls with outstretched wings. Sometimes they slid down the wind till they almost touched the sea. Then with slow, strong beatings of their wings they rose high again, slanted seaward against the breeze, swept in wide circles, lazily indifferent as it seemed to destination, but bent on satisfying themselves with exquisite, smooth motion.

Round the end of the point a boat came into sight. Two men were rowing her, and four others sat in the stern. She was heading out to sea, and made slow progress against the wind, the flowing tide and the waves. Stephen watched her plunging forward, saw the waves strike her and check her in her course, saw the occasional larger waves break into clouds of spray against her bow and drench the rowers' backs. He contrasted the slow progress of the boat, the continuous battling which was required to drive her on, the toil of her rowers, with the swift, easy gliding of the gulls through the air. The boat went as man goes towards his goal, with immense labour, much buffeting,

and very slowly. The birds flew as man's thoughts fly, as his hopes fly. The comparison pleased Stephen for a while. Then he began to wonder what the boat was and where she was going. It struck him as strange that in this large boat, with room enough in her for the pulling of four oars, only two men out of six should row. Why did she carry four passengers? They could not be fishermen who sat idle in the stern. And where was she going? Her head pointed seawards, and there was nothing beyond her except Ilaun an Anama. Was she going to the island? What business could four men seated in the stern have with old Rafferty? Stephen became extremely curious about this boat and the men in her. He turned to the table beside him, took the bell in his hand and rang it. Nurse Lewis came into the room.

"I am very sorry to trouble you," said Stephen, "but——"

"It's no trouble at all," said the nurse. "I should be very angry if you didn't ring for me directly you wanted anything."

"Thank you. Will you please get me my field-glasses? They are in a brown leather case, and I think they are hanging up on a peg in the hall. If not, you will find them in the library at the back of my writing-table."

Nurse Lewis glanced out of the window. She had strict orders that Stephen was not to be allowed to excite himself in any way, but there seemed nothing in sight from the window which could excite even a child. There was a boat on the sea rowing slowly, and a boy prowling among the rocks. There were a few gulls hovering about. There was nothing else. She reflected that it might amuse her patient to watch the boy or

the boat through his glasses. She fetched them, took them from their case, placed them on the table beside the bell and left the room again.

Stephen took the glasses in his left hand and adjusted the focus. They were large and heavy. It was difficult to manage them with one hand. It took him some time to screw them out to the point which suited his eyes, and then some time more, for his hand trembled a good deal, before he got the boat into his field of vision. He saw that the four men in the stern were policemen. They wore their helmets and their full uniform. They had their carbines propped, muzzles upward, between their knees. They had not gone out boating for pleasure or to fish. They were on duty of some kind. One of the rowers he did not know or could not recognise even with the glasses. The other was Johnny Darcy; half-destitute, habitually drunken fisherman when Stephen knew him well, the prosperous-looking toady of Heverin afterwards, the hanger-on of the League, whom Mr. Manders had named along with Sheridan as one of the "boys" whom Major Thorne would have done well to arrest. The sight of this man rowing a body of police out to Ilaun an Anama filled Stephen with a vague uneasiness. It was a mere accident no doubt that Darcy had been hired for the work, but Stephen disliked and distrusted the man. He found it difficult to believe that an expedition guided by Darcy could be anything but evil. And why were the police going to the island? What business could they have with Rafferty? Stephen's vague uneasiness turned to fear. His hand trembled so much that it was impossible for him any longer to see through the glasses. He laid them down and sat still, trying to steady himself, resting his hand. He

kept his eyes fixed on the boat. He saw her reach the familiar cove on the lee side of the island. The police left her. He could distinguish the four figures walking up the beach. They then disappeared from view. He saw Darcy and his companion standing in the boat. He guessed from their attitude that they were leaning on their oars and keeping the boat's head steady while they waited. Then after an interval there were figures on the beach again, a knot of men walking together, four of them or five. He took the glasses again, and with a great effort held them steady to his eyes.

There were five men on the beach. Four of them were the policemen he had seen leave the boat. The fifth was Rafferty. There was no mistaking the long white beard, the figure bent a little with age, the gait which seemed feeble in contrast with the striding of the strong young men around him. They reached the boat. Darcy and the other man pushed her close up against the shore. Two of the police climbed over the bow, holding their carbines in their hands. It came to Rafferty's turn. He moved awkwardly and seemed to find a difficulty in boarding the boat. He did not use his hands. Stephen, now that the old man stood by himself, could see by the position of his arms that he was handcuffed. That was the reason of his awkwardness. The stern of the boat lifted slightly and fell on the waves. Rafferty, stepping cautiously aft, stumbled, and was almost pitched headlong. The two policemen who had entered the boat before him took him by the arm and pulled him to his seat. Then the other two policemen embarked. The boat was pushed out. Darcy stood up, stepped a mast and spread a brown lug sail, booming out the foot of it with an oar so that the boat ran fast before the wind.

Old Rafferty was a prisoner. He was in the hands of the police on his way to gaol. Stephen sat numb with amazement, watching the boat as she fled from the island. Then suddenly a thought struck him like a sharp pain. Rafferty was suspected of murdering Mrs. Hegarty and wounding him. There had been some monstrous blunder. There was not, there could not be, any evidence to connect Rafferty with the crime, but the fact was plain before his eyes. He saw the old man taken by the police.

Stephen dropped the glasses and rang his bell furiously. Nurse Lewis was at his side in a moment.

"Send at once for Mr. Manders," he said, "send a groom on horseback. Send to his house. If he isn't there let the groom find out where he is and follow him. I want to see him as soon as possible. There must be no delay. Do you understand? There must be no delay whatever."

Nurse Lewis looked at him anxiously. His eyes were very bright. His face was flushed. It was obvious to her that he was in a condition of high excitement. She could not even guess what had happened to disturb him. But she wasted no time in speculating.

"You are getting feverish," she said. "You had better go back to bed at once."

Stephen stamped his foot impatiently. It was, under the circumstances, a curiously ineffective way of expressing strong feeling, for his legs and feet were swathed in blankets. He produced no more sound than a cat which jumps off a table, and the action, clothed and seated as he was, seemed ridiculous. He supplemented it with a command very angrily uttered—

"Do what I bid you and don't talk."

Nurse Lewis by way of reply laid her fingers on his pulse for a moment. Then she said—

“You ought not to see any one.”

Stephen snatched his hand from her and rose unsteadily from his chair. He flung the shawl back from his shoulders and shook the encompassing blankets off his legs.

“If you won’t send,” he said, “I shall go for him myself. I tell you I must see him.”

He couldn’t possibly have gone. He couldn’t, as Nurse Lewis knew very well, have got as far as the head of the stairs by himself. But she was a wise woman, and, for one of her years, had a good deal of experience. She decided that bad as it might be for Stephen to talk to Mr. Manders it would certainly be worse for him to engage in a physical conflict with her. She proposed a compromise.

“Very well; I’ll send for him if you will go back to bed. Unless you keep quiet you won’t be able to speak to him when he comes.”

For an hour Stephen tossed and turned in his bed. Nurse Lewis, even without the aid of her clinical thermometer, could tell that he was becoming more and more feverish. She knew that a long illness, perhaps death, would be the penalty of this excitement. She was perfectly helpless, unable to guess what had caused the sudden change in her patient’s condition; she could do nothing to calm him. She had bidden the groom who rode for Mr. Manders, fetch the doctor too. She heartily wished that one or other of them would arrive.

There was a noise of wheels on the gravel outside the house. For all Nurse Lewis’s anxiety and expectation it was Stephen who heard it first. He suddenly lay quite still.

"Is that Manders?" he asked.

"I will go and see."

She met Mr. Manders in the hall.

"I don't like the way he is," she said. "Something has excited him. He seemed to be getting on very well this morning, and I left him sitting up in a chair. He rang for me, and when I went to him I found him feverish. Something must have happened while I was out of the room. I don't know what it was. He insisted on my sending for you at once. I had to give in to him. But please be very careful. In his condition a feverish attack may be most dangerous."

She led the way upstairs while she talked, and opened the door of the bedroom for Mr. Manders.

"Shall I stay?" she asked.

"It seems rude to say no, and of course, Nurse, I should be delighted to have you with us; a couple of bachelors are always the better for a lady's company, but——"

Nurse Lewis frowned and left the room. On other occasions she was not averse to listening to Mr. Manders' compliments. She liked the appreciation of her pretty face which she saw in his eyes. Now she was frightened and anxious. She had little inclination to flirt. Mr. Manders looked at her in mild astonishment as she flounced away. Then he advanced into the room.

"Well, Butler, old man, how are you? You look rather a wreck, I must say. When a man hasn't had a shave for a week or ten days his appearance is apt to be highly disreputable."

Stephen lay on the bed, staring with wide, unblinking eyes. Either he did not at once recognise his visitor, or he found some difficulty in speaking. He

muttered some words rapidly. Mr. Manders did not hear them. He went on speaking cheerfully.

"I declare to goodness I think you have the best of it up here. I shouldn't mind lying up for a week myself, if I could make sure of a good-looking young woman like that nurse of yours to look after me. Quite worth while getting a bullet through your lung, eh, Butler?"

"Rafferty," said Stephen, "old Rafferty."

Mr. Manders grew suddenly serious. He guessed what was troubling Stephen, though how the news of the arrest had reached him he could not tell. He recollected the nurse's warning. He felt that he was on dangerous ground. How he could speak about Rafferty without exciting Stephen he did not know.

"Rafferty's all right," he said weakly.

Stephen broke out furiously—

"Rafferty's not all right. How dare you stand there and tell me that he is? I won't be treated like a baby and put off with lies. Tell me the truth. Do you hear? Tell me the truth, or I'll go myself and find it out from some one who will tell me. Damn you, Manders, damn you! How can you stand there with a smile on your face and say Rafferty's all right, when you know that the police have him arrested?"

Then suddenly his tone changed. His anger seemed to die away. He spoke pleadingly—

"Manders, I've always trusted you. I've liked you. You'll not go back on me now? Tell me the truth. I'm weak, Manders, desperately weak, and I can't stand much suspense. Believe me, I'll be worse and not better if you keep the truth from me."

Mr. Manders saw that it would be better to tell the

truth, and he did not hesitate to tell it frankly and completely.

"Rafferty has been arrested," he said, "on the charge of being concerned in the murder of Mrs. Hegarty and the attempt on your life. Wait," he said, for Stephen had started up in his bed. "Early in the evening on which the murder was committed Rafferty rowed ashore. I saw him on his way up here at half-past seven, and he made a lame excuse about going to see you when I spoke to him. No one knows where he spent the rest of the evening. The police saw his boat on the beach at eleven o'clock. He didn't go back to his island till after that. An old rifle was picked up in the sunk fence behind the wall where the shots were fired. It was Rafferty's rifle. We've got proof of that. And it wasn't the rifle Sheridan used. That was found on the spot where he fell. This one was dropped by the other fellow, the one I didn't hit. Both rifles had been fired. Listen to me now, Butler, like a good man. Rafferty has a bad record. He was in gaol in the Fenian times, and everybody knows that the Fenians are at the bottom of all this shooting that's going on now. I put it to you as a sensible man, what could we do but arrest him?"

"He didn't do it," said Stephen. "He'd neither hand, act, nor part in it. I swear to you, Manders, he couldn't do it. He'd no more do it than you would. You must get him off, Manders. You must let him go again. I tell you you must."

Mr. Manders' face became hard. His lips tightened.

"He'll have to stand his trial," he said, "along with Sheridan. He'll get a fair trial."

"Get him off," said Stephen. "He's an innocent man. If it was with my last breath I'd swear he

was innocent. You must get him off. Do you hear me?"

Mr. Manders crossed the room and rang the bell. It was evident that Stephen was working himself up to a dangerous pitch of excitement. The nurse entered.

"Go away," said Stephen. "I have something more to say to Mr. Manders. You must let me finish speaking."

The nurse came over to the bed and stood beside him.

"You must lie down," she said, "and keep quiet. You are making yourself very ill."

Stephen with a great effort mastered himself. He spoke calmly and collectedly.

"Manders."

"Yes; I'm listening."

"Get the best man in Ireland, the best man there is, for the defence. If I'm not dead I'll be at the trial and give evidence. Get Hegarty to give evidence. He knew old Rafferty. He'll know he's innocent. Get Staunton. He'll be well by that time, and he knew Rafferty. Get Sheridan. Sheridan will be hanged I suppose. When the rope is round Sheridan's neck, let him swear that Rafferty's innocent. They'll believe a man's oath when the rope's round his neck. Oh, save him somehow, Manders! Spend money, my money. I don't care how much you spend. They say money can do anything. The man's innocent, I tell you. As sure as there's a God in heaven, he's innocent."

The nurse slipped her arm round Stephen and gently forced him down to the bed. He went on speaking, but his words lost coherence. At last he burst into a flood of tears. The nurse nodded to Mr. Manders.

"Do what he tells you," she said; "it'll be a help to

him when he's getting better to be told that everything he wished has been done."

Mr. Manders left the room. He had been sure when he entered it that old Rafferty was Sheridan's companion on the night of the murder. He was less sure about it when he went away.

"I'll get the best man I can to defend him," he said. "But I doubt if it will be a bit of use."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE doctor took the place of Mr. Manders at Stephen's bedside. He, like Nurse Lewis, was worried and irritated by the change in his patient. Next morning he came again and looked grave. He was anxious. He spoke of things which might happen or were happening, things with long names derived, as the names which doctors give to diseases often are, from Greek words. Later in the day he telegraphed to Galway for another doctor—a man with something more than a local reputation for skill and knowledge. He, in turn, said obscure words and, since Stephen Butler was a man of some importance, passed on the responsibility of giving the final decision. A very famous surgeon was sent for and came all the way from Dublin. He was a baronet, and Mr. Manders paid him a fee suited to his eminence in his profession and his station in life. In return he greatly gratified the first and second doctors by repeating their Greek words, and gave it as his opinion that Stephen Butler would not live. He turned out to be perfectly right. Stephen died.

They buried him in the vault where the dust of his father, his grandfather, and other remoter Butlers lay. Dean Ponsonby, for the second time in the course of three weeks, read the funeral service in the little churchyard of Dhulough. Mr. Manders, a smitten man, from

whose eyes the laughter had departed, stood by and sprinkled the clay upon the coffin. The people of the two villages crowded to the funeral. With them came the farmers from the remotest corners of the estate; men in white flannel jackets, and grey trousers; girls with bare feet, in crimson petticoats, grey shawls, and checked head-handkerchiefs; old women, who crouched round the walls of the graveyard and peered out from the shawls which covered them; children, boys and girls, clad alike in single garments of flannel, gathered at their waists. The freshly turned loose earth on Carry Hegarty's grave was trampled hard and flat by bare feet and heavy boots.

When the last words of the service were said Dean Ponsonby passed slowly into the church. Old Dogherty, the sexton, with tears rolling down his cheeks, and three of Stephen's servants bore the coffin into the vault. Mr. Manders stood bareheaded watching them. Then from the women in the crowd there burst a howl of grief. The older men joined in it. The younger, with faces screwed up and contorted in the effort to maintain an appearance of self-control, wept silently. The first outburst of grief passed, and the people waited. The aged crones, who crouched by the walls like hooded votaries of death and horrible decay, began to keen. First one and then another of them cried the phrases of a chant, while her sister hags droned a dissonant accompaniment. Their mothers and grandmothers before them had keened over the graves of other Butlers of Dhulough. These keened with wilder grief. They were experts in the art of bewailing the dead. Again and again they had been called on to express their people's horror of the grim fate which lay in wait for all of them. Over the drowning of the

young fisherman ; over the death of the girl-mother, conquered by her labour pains ; over the timely passing of the crippled patriarch, they cried alike a terrified defiance of the relentless force which dragged living creatures out of the sunshine into the dark.

Now with intenser fear and more heartrending horror they keened for Stephen Butler. Whom would death spare if it did not spare one who was rich and brave and strong and young ? There was present in their minds the sense that they wailed for the last of a great race, for a man who, like his ancestors, had stood for his country, had been the friend of the people, had loved the land. Present also was the feeling of his youth, a deep resentment against the injustice of death which laid capturing hands upon the young. But most of all, these old women, full of a pagan delight in the force of life, felt the futility of the existence of a man who died childless, the utter waste of Stephen Butler's youth and strength. No woman had lain in his arms. No man-child lived to call him father. No girl, even, had drawn life from him before his own life was quenched.

The wind moaned far out over the sea, and gusts sweeping up from the beach tossed the garments and hair of the people in the graveyard. Wisps of grey sea-fog chilled them. Then denser fog and fine rain came, borne by an increasing wind. The keening ceased. The old women drew their shawls close over their heads. The children moved away in little groups. Here and there, regardless of the fact that the ground was hallowed by prayers strange to them, men knelt beside the vault and uttered words of supplication. Not till late in the evening, till the roof of the church and the gravestones and the walls dripped with cold rain, did the last of these mourners turn away and go home.

Mr. Manders treated Stephen Butler's commands about Rafferty's trial as a sacred charge. He engaged, at his own expense, an able barrister to defend the old man. All that could be done was done to persuade the jury of his innocence. In those days the upper classes in Ireland were frightened, and frightened men take no chances. Rafferty and Sheridan were tried in Belfast. A Connacht jury might or might not regard the evidence in deciding upon their verdict when the case had any connection with the agrarian struggle. A conviction, if the case were strong against the prisoners, might be hoped for in Belfast. Against Sheridan the evidence was overwhelming. He was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. Against Rafferty the evidence was sufficient. There was a train of circumstance, a series of facts, which taken together were very difficult to explain away. The old man had been seen on shore on the evening of the murder. He had been met on the avenue of Dhulough House by Mr. Manders and Major Thorne. His gun had been found in the sunk fence by the police. His boat was seen on the beach by a police constable at eleven o'clock, so that it was obvious that he did not return to his island until after the murders had been committed.

The lawyer whom Mr. Manders engaged did his best. He advanced a theory that the gun had been stolen from the island, that Rafferty, missing it, had come on shore to search for it; that, suspecting some mischief, he had gone up to Dhulough House to consult Stephen Butler; that he had afterwards gone to look for Sheridan and the other unknown murderer whom he suspected of stealing the gun. The lawyer's account of Rafferty's actions was in reality perfectly true; but it struck the jury simply as an ingenious and far-fetched

hypothesis. Behind the circumstantial evidence lay the fact that Rafferty was a Fenian, and had been condemned years before for his share in a desperate conspiracy. To the minds of the respectable citizens of Belfast this was a damning record.

The judge, in summing up the evidence, tore the pleading of the lawyer to tatters. If Rafferty had gone ashore to recover his stolen property, why did he not proceed at once to the police barrack? The jury appreciated the judge's point. To each of these Belfast shopkeepers an appeal to the police under such circumstances would have been an entirely natural thing. If Rafferty suspected, said the judge, that his stolen gun was to be used for any felonious purpose, why did he not warn Major Thorne? Major Thorne was a magistrate, and it was admitted that Rafferty had met him on the avenue of Dhulough House. Again the jury-men felt the force of the reasoning. Each of them regarded magistrates as the enemies of evil-doing and lawlessness of all kinds. Besides, was not Rafferty a Fenian? The judge told them not to be influenced by the fact of Rafferty's previous imprisonment. But how could they help remembering it? Fenians were men who took up arms in open rebellion, and that to the mind of the respectable citizen was a crime hardly discernible from murder. It was inevitable that Rafferty should be found guilty. It was equally inevitable that he should be sentenced to death.

Sheridan, awaiting execution, confessed his own share in the crime and solemnly swore that Rafferty was innocent. He swore that he himself had stolen the gun knowing it to be a good one and suitable for his purpose. Nobody in authority believed Sheridan. Nobody wanted to believe him. It was necessary that life

should be paid for with life, so that the majesty of the law should be vindicated, so that order should be restored to Ireland. There was evidence enough against Rafferty. He was hanged.

A few days after the execution Mr. Manders sat in his office with a large box of papers beside him. They were old letters, memoranda, receipts, and newspaper cuttings collected from the drawers of Stephen Butler's writing-table. Mr. Manders sorted and docketed those which seemed of any interest, and threw any which were totally useless into a waste-paper basket. A cheery fire burnt in the grate behind him. As he worked a clerk entered bringing him a letter from Lord Daintree. It dealt in the first instance with some matters relative to the management of the estate; but the old gentleman seemed to have plenty of leisure, for when his business was disposed of he rambled on, covering several sheets of notepaper with reflections on the recent events at Dhulough. The letter was dated from Lord Daintree's club in London.

"Father Staunton called on me yesterday on his way to France. He told me that he has resigned his parish and means to end his days abroad. From the look of him I should say that he hasn't long to live. I never saw a man more cut up than he is. He has some notion of settling down in Brittany, near a convent of which his sister was once an inmate. He showed me a letter he received from old Rafferty, written a few days before he was hanged. The greater part of it was in Irish which I could not read, but I was very much struck by a quotation with which it ended—

Ego Ditis opacos
Cogor adire lacus, viduos a lumine Phœbi,
Et vastum Phlegethonta pati.

I don't know the lines. They sound like Virgil, but I don't believe they are in the *Æneid*. They are interesting because they show that the old man died a Pagan. "*Lacus viduos a lumine Phæbi.*" That way of thinking about the hereafter is not Catholic. It is not even Christian. It is purely pagan. I don't think any the worse of it for that. I dare say the guess is as good as any other."

Mr. Manders paused in his reading. He was not sure that he knew what Lord Daintree meant. He himself had a clear-cut creed, a definite scheme of the future, an authorised map of the world beyond. He had never been tempted to doubt its authenticity. It struck him as foolish, if not impious, to talk of pagan guesses being as good as Christian certainties.

"I hear that Hegarty is leaving Dhulough too. Poor fellow! I'm sure he's hit hard, and he is not the sort of man to stand up against a blow. I'm not likely to be back in the near future, so you and Dean Ponsonby will be left, like Lion and Moonshine in the worthy Athenian weaver's play, to bury the dead."

Mr. Manders was not well-read in English literature. He missed the point of the allusion; nor would he have been inclined to admire its aptness even if he had caught it.

"I suppose the Dean sometimes dines with you now? Next time he does you might ask him from me how recent events square with his theory of a wise and kindly Providence which overrules human affairs. You and I have got off nearly scot free, although we were, I suppose, more or less responsible for a good deal of the trouble. Snell, who perhaps deserved to suffer a little, is perfectly contented and happy. He keeps adding to his really marvellous collection of old coins

by means of the modern coin which you collect for him, rack-renting and evicting his tenants. On the other hand, Mrs. Hegarty, a pretty little woman though supremely silly, and Stephen Butler, a model landlord, and, even from the League's point of view, something of a patriot, get killed. Sheridan, a dreamy sort of boy, driven half-mad by what he took for oppression, and Rafferty, who appears to have been quite innocent, are hanged for killing them. The good Dean's Providence had no business to connive at such proceedings. Even I, who am not particularly wise and not at all benevolent, could have managed much better if the guiding of events had been left to me. For the good of society in general I should have arranged for Heverin to be hanged. That fellow is a scoundrel, and will live to prey upon the people after our day is over. I strongly suspect that his little finger will be thicker than our loins ever were. I should also have hanged John Darcy and a couple more like him. Some of those blackguards must have had a hand in the shooting. It really vexes me to think that they have escaped the gallows. I foresee, with a feeling of considerable disgust, that they will become leading politicians, and have unlimited opportunities for getting drunk. The condition of Ireland under their guidance is not pleasant to contemplate. Providence has a good deal to answer for."

Mr. Manders growled. He was a man who liked to roll out a good round oath, who had no objection to a joke with a sacred subject. He did not like what he called "damned, cold-blooded profanity"; and Lord Daintree's letter seemed to him full of it. He felt all the more angry because the indictment of Providence was singularly damaging.

The end of the letter puzzled him without restoring his good humour.

"What are you going to write upon Stephen Butler's tombstone? I suppose that Quaker cousin of his from Belfast will want to display some singularly inappropriate text. I shouldn't wonder if he suggested 'His end was peace!' By the way, is that a text? You might ask the Dean to look it up. If I had the settling of the matter, I should put—

"'Stephen Butler—the last Irish gentleman who was fool enough to be a patriot.'

"There may be others, of course, in the future; but by the time they turn up, people will have stopped reading our inscription.

"After all, he was a fool. I don't use the word in any offensive sense, merely as the world uses it. If by any chance old Rafferty is wrong about the '*opacos lacus*' and the Dean is right; if there really is a sort of general reckoning up, and we all have to put in an appearance on a Judgment Day, then I imagine Stephen Butler's particular kind of folly will turn out to be one of the few things which it is worth a man's while to go in for seriously. I've tried a good many sorts of folly in my day, and I've tried what's usually called wisdom. Most of them look pretty well now—on the stage with the coloured limelight on them—but if there is such a thing as daylight, I can quite imagine that the rouge and the rags will have an uncommonly shabby appearance."

Mr. Manders laid Lord Daintree's letter aside, covering it carefully with a paper-weight, and resumed the work of dealing with Stephen Butler's papers. The various piles of letters and memoranda on the table before him grew larger, and the waste-paper basket gradually filled. He came near the end of his task.

He took from the box beside him a stained and discoloured parchment envelope. It was endorsed in stiff old-fashioned writing. The ink was faded to a brown colour, but the words were quite legible. Mr. Manders read them—

“For my son Antony. And I charge him to bind his children after him as I have bound him.”

Mr. Manders looked at the envelope with some interest. He guessed that the writing must be that of the old Stephen Butler. He wondered what the envelope contained. Hitherto his glance through the papers had revealed nothing very exciting. This envelope stimulated his curiosity. He opened it and drew out a sheet of parchment. He read slowly the account of the swearing of the oath in Dhulough Church, and then, with a feeling of horror, the words of the oath itself. He laid the parchment on the table before him. Its ends curled up, and it fell into folds along the deep creases which crossed its surface.

Mr. Manders knew that it was a document of some historical interest, that it might very well be regarded by the next heir of Dhulough as a valuable family possession. He was not moved by antiquarian sentiment. He cared very little for the feeling of the next heir, who had still to be sought for among remote kindred of the Butlers. He regarded the oath as an act of extreme folly, and the record of it as a dangerous thing. It might conceivably affect some one else as he thought it had affected Stephen Butler. He took it up and tried to tear it across. The folded parchment resisted his strength, his fingers slid along the greasy surface of it. The document remained unturned.

He laid it down and looked at it again while he lit his pipe. Then there came to him a recollection of a

passage of the Old Testament which Dean Ponsonby read aloud in church once every year. There was a king of Judah who found himself obliged to deal with a dangerous document, probably a parchment which it was not easy to tear. Mr. Manders' eyes twinkled.

"I can't do better," he said, "than follow the example of Jehoiachim the son of Josiah."

He took the penknife from his pocket and cut the parchment into four pieces. He threw them one by one into the fire which burned on the hearth, and watched them till they were consumed.

Nowadays there is no longer a prophet Jeremiah to write again the words that were in the first roll for the benefit of the Butlers of Dhulough and their class.

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